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Friday, 25 February 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Biaou	(Benin)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Cross-border issues in West Africa

Progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86)

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05-24925 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Cross-border issues in West Africa

Progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Luxembourg, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Ould-Abdallah to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation to Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Special Adviser on Child Protection to the Executive-Secretary of the Economic Community of States of West Africa (ECOWAS), under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Diouf to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2005/86, containing the progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: This open debate on cross-border issues in West Africa comes at a critical moment for peace and security in the subregion. We see some signs of hope and encouragement. Yet we also see very worrying developments.

As the current crisis in Togo reminds us, much remains to be done to establish peaceful, constitutional transfers of power as the region's norm. I urge all sides in Togo to exercise maximum restraint while efforts continue to find a peaceful solution to this crisis.

The progress report that you now have before you reflects my serious concern about the perpetuation and indeed proliferation of conflict situations in West Africa. It details the efforts of the international community, including the United Nations Office for West Africa, to adopt a regional approach to peace efforts in the region and to implement the recommendations made last year by this Council.

The region continues to face grave security challenges. Border areas are especially volatile, with populations at risk from illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons, recruitment of child soldiers, banditry, rape and environmental damage. The lack of funding for reform of the security sector, and in particular for the reintegration and rehabilitation phases of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programmes, is disturbing, given their central importance.

Youth unemployment levels are shockingly high, and the accompanying desperation carries a real risk of political and social unrest in countries emerging from crisis, and even in those that are currently stable. And there is very rapid population growth in the region's

urban areas, where job opportunities are limited and social services are far from adequate.

The report highlights areas that require immediate and longer-term action. Its recommendations are directed at a wide range of players, including the Security Council and other parts of the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral development partners, the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), individual Member States and civil society organizations. They place particular emphasis on good governance. And they call on all of us to practice prevention and to address root causes of conflict at an earlier stage.

I welcome the recent efforts of ECOWAS and its members to address the complex challenges facing the region. There is growing cooperation among security agencies to crack down on cross-border crime. Efforts are also under way to protect children, to stem small-arms flows and to involve civil society groups more regularly in peacebuilding and other initiatives.

I am also pleased at the constructive partnership that has emerged among ECOWAS, the United Nations system and other relevant actors. My Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Ould-Abdallah — who is here with us today — and his team will continue to do their part. I assure the Council of my own strong commitment, and I look forward to working closely with it, on an urgent basis, to improve lives throughout this region where improvement is so badly needed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah: I am very pleased to be here today and to participate in these discussions on the progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border challenges to peace and security in West Africa. Together with my colleagues, I thank the Secretary-General for his strong support. We also wish Benin a productive presidency of the Security Council. We are grateful to Security Council members for their continuous attention and interest with regard to the challenges to durable peace in West Africa.

My Office remains focused on the fulfilment of its mandate. In that connection, we will continue to do the following. First, we will facilitate coherent and integrated approaches to peacebuilding among United Nations entities established in West Africa. Secondly, we will strengthen our partnership with West African States and subregional organizations, especially with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Thirdly, on behalf of the Secretary-General, we will continue to carry out preventive diplomacy and early warning missions. Fourthly, we will continue to go beyond the news headlines, report to Headquarters on significant developments in the subregion and devise policy recommendations that provide a basis for effective peaceful crisis management. Finally, we will initiate outreach activities, in partnership with West African Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and other international actors, to address persistent and emerging challenges to peace and security.

Recommendations from the Security Council are the focus of our attention. The needs and requirements of West African States and people will continue to motivate and guide our work.

The mandate of my Office is carried out in a particularly complex environment with new and recurrent crises. That makes our commitment crucial. Working within such a complex environment also further complicates our task. We take small steps in emergency situations where giant leaps would be more appropriate. Hope and faith in a better future should, however, remain alive and vibrant.

To strengthen our action within the framework of our mandate, we focus on three broad challenges.

The first is an institutional challenge. We must further strengthen institutional collaboration among the United Nations entities in West Africa. Of particular relevance here are the meetings of the Heads of three United Nations peacekeeping missions — in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone — and the United Nations Office in Guinea Bissau, which I chair on a quarterly basis. Those meetings are aimed at broadening inter-mission cooperation, improving the exchange of information and experience, pooling assets and collaborating across State borders.

Stronger collaboration between the United Nations and other partners in the subregion — especially the Organization's partnership with ECOWAS, West African States and civil society — is also a priority. We will also continue to institutionalize our collaboration with development partners, including the World Bank and the European Union. In that connection, I should like to mention the ongoing trilateral partnership among the European Union, ECOWAS and my Office, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA).

There is also a methodological challenge. Amid multiple challenges, we have to prioritize issues, areas and objectives. As suggested by a number of Council members during the retreat last June on Long Island, UNOWA has established a matrix for a more effective follow-up of Security Council recommendations contained in the presidential statement of 25 March 2004 (S/PRST/2004/7). Issues such as small arms, child soldiers, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, roadblocks and cross-border peacebuilding are among our key priorities.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, we are targeting the tracing and marking of small arms, the establishment of a regional register and the transformation of the ECOWAS Moratorium into a legally binding instrument.

In the area of security sector reform, combating non-military threats to the security sector is a main priority. Specific issues to address are health — especially the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in armed forces and security forces — the administration of justice and the strengthening of customs services.

With respect to integrated borders and cross-border peacebuilding, four clusters have been established: Guinea/ Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia/Sierra Leone, Mali/Burkina Faso/Côte d'Ivoire/Ghana, Mauritania/Mali/Niger and Senegal/Gambia/Guinea-Bissau. Specific security, humanitarian and social development priorities are being prioritized.

Finally, in connection with our efforts to contribute to the strengthening of ECOWAS's institutional capacity for peacebuilding, an objective defined in the June 2004 UNOWA-ECOWAS joint work programme was the elaboration of an ECOWAS peacekeeping curriculum. The curriculum, which is aimed at informing future regional peacekeeping operations, is currently being finalized.

There is, finally, a last challenge: the doctrinal challenge. Our efforts to build peace concentrate on countries at war. That is a logical course of action, given the burning political and humanitarian emergencies encountered in such States.

Countries not at war, however, deserve support. They remain fragile and could be weakened by violence in their neighbourhood. Stronger support from the international community is needed for countries with working democratic processes, such as Ghana or Niger, where free and fair elections have been organized most recently.

The challenges ahead remain daunting. Togo, where a clumsy transfer of power was followed by great confusion, is a clear illustration of the fragility of peace and stability in parts of West Africa. Togo should also remind us that unless we address small crises in a timely and coherent manner, they could easily be transformed into bigger and more complicated issues, as happened in Côte d'Ivoire. Another concern is about what will happen next October with the scheduled elections in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. What might the impact be on Sierra Leone?

However, we remain confident that ongoing collaboration between the international community and West African populations and States will help to overcome some of those challenges. For the last two years we have worked closely with the Ghanaian chairmanship of ECOWAS. Our collaboration with Niger, current chair of the West African organization, is equally strong. Naturally, the support of the Security Council remains a precious asset.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Mr. Diouf *(spoke in French)*: First of all, I should like once again to transmit to you, Mr. President, the warm wishes of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who has been following our work very closely and is very pleased at the debate we had the

day before yesterday on child soldiers. The Executive Secretary also asked me to convey his congratulations to the Security Council and to say how pleased he is by the special importance that the members of the Council have given to questions of peace and security in Africa, particularly in West Africa.

With regard to today's debate, this is something that the Executive Secretary holds dear because, as the Council knows, at its beginning, ECOWAS did not include peace and security on its agenda. The main purpose of ECOWAS is to foster economic regional integration through policy harmonization by adopting a community-based approach to development and socio-economic problems. However, the emergence of crises in West Africa forced ECOWAS to review its agenda and revise its work in order to include questions of peace, security and stability. That means that when we looked through the interim report of the Secretary-General, we were particularly struck by his exhaustive coverage of those problems and the relevant solutions that he has proposed throughout the report, which we completely support.

As the Council knows, the cross-border problems that we face in West Africa — including human trafficking, small arms and light weapons exportation and proliferation, money-laundering and illicit drug trafficking — are all threats to peace, security and stability. Those threats stem from the fact that today there are organized gangs with networks in several countries of the subregion and even outside the region who control the entire process linked to those activities.

In recent years, the region has experienced a number of political, ethnic and religious crises, which have jeopardized the economic progress made in some of the Community's member States. Non-State armed gangs very often prolong armed conflicts, thus leading to massive destruction of infrastructure and to economic collapse. Most of those gangs survive by means of arms and drugs trafficking, money-laundering and human trafficking, and very often they control the richest areas of the countries in crisis.

Within the ECOWAS area, such armed gangs are often both numerous and complex. They have political roots and, depending on the situation, may mutate into criminal gangs. Their composition is diverse, even where, as in most cases, one ethnic group constitutes the group's core. And even if they have roots in a political party, they very often escape the control of the party, particularly when attempts are made to end a crisis. There are also foreign citizens in those gangs who have been recruited or who have freely joined the movement.

It is that modus operandi which encourages, inter alia, the participation of children in armed conflicts and their use as soldiers. The porousness of our borders, the spread of poverty, underemployment, the weakness of security forces and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that I have mentioned are all factors that lead to the entrenchment and expansion of those armed gangs, who may be based in a country neighbouring their theatre of operations.

In West Africa, as we have noted, the modus operandi of those armed gangs is based on violence and terror directed against civilians. In light of the situation, ECOWAS, which is very concerned about the well-being of our population and the impossibility of development without peace and security, has established a number of instruments in order to prevent and combat those negative activities. Those instruments include, for example, the Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, the Convention on Extradition, the Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Protocol to Combat Illicit Trafficking in Drugs, a protocol against money-laundering and the Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering, the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa and, finally, the Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security.

ECOWAS has identified three main strategic approaches to implement those instruments.

First, there is the political dimension, which is intended to restore dialogue among belligerents while insisting on the need to respect the basic laws of the country concerned. ECOWAS has continued to emphasize that political approach in order to avoid rewarding rebellion.

Second is the legal approach, which seeks to facilitate the deployment of a rather strong security force within the context of a comprehensive peace agreement. In this regard, cooperation with institutions having jurisdiction over war crimes has been helpful.

Thirdly, aspects related to development are taken into account through the process of building, rebuilding and restoring infrastructure with the participation of our development partners.

We would stress here that ECOWAS also attaches special importance to prevention as a major way to combat cross-border problems. This is why ECOWAS adopted the Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, as well as a protocol relating to the free movement of goods and people.

Those protocols tackle the main causes of conflicts in the region and provide clear indications with regard to the process to be implemented and respected in establishing a favourable context for sustainable peace. We could also refer to the separation of powers, independence of the legislative branch, the right to free association, participation of women and young people in the development and reconstruction process and in the peace process, the role of the army in a democratic society and, finally, combating the proliferation of weapons.

Those are a set of guidelines that should be followed in order to bring about an environment conducive to good economic and social development in the subregion, and those are the points I wanted to share with you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Diouf for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): The report of the Secretary-General and his presence with us today are both exceedingly welcome, as is your presence, Sir, underlining the importance of this subject.

The report addresses key issues, many of which we discussed during the mission of the Security Council to West Africa last June. The discussions we had there in the field and with the special representatives demonstrated to us all the importance and the vitality of the work being carried out in West Africa and the job being done, day by day, making clear why the United Nations is crucial to the development and peaceful progress of West Africa.

I have to say that, as I am confronted by people in New York and elsewhere who complain about the inadequacies of the United Nations and why we are not doing this, that or the other, it is striking in West Africa that the message one gets consistently is appreciation for what day by day the United Nations does on the ground, and the plea is not so much "Could you get out of our hair?", but "Please, can we have more of the United Nations?".

We give particular thanks for the briefings we have juts heard from the Special Representative and from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose contribution is immeasurable and, of course, increasing.

I should like to associate myself with the statement to be made later by the presidency of the European Union, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg.

Cross-border and regional cooperation in West Africa is becoming a model for other regions facing similar issues — a model showing the benefits that cooperation can bring. The need for us to support regional and subregional efforts in Africa seems to me obvious.

The efforts being made to further peace and security demand a response from the United Nations and from the Council in particular. The need for stronger institutional links between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) is obvious; we discussed that at our meeting in Nairobi. But the practical cooperation now between the AU and what it is doing in Darfur and what the United Nations wants to do as a whole in the Sudan just demonstrates the practical case for that cooperation.

Last year's mission was encouraging. It demonstrated that progress was being made to strengthen coordination on the ground between United Nations bodies as well as cooperation with ECOWAS, with national actors and with civil society organizations. That collaboration is particularly welcome, and it is essential if we are going to have a coordinated, effective effort.

Why do we need a regional approach? Why did the Secretary-General have the wisdom to appoint a Special Representative on a regional basis as well as the other special representatives? Well, partly it is because the problems of Africa and of individual

countries quite evidently transcend national boundaries. Indeed — and I think we heard this from an earlier contribution — the free movements in the unpleasant aspects of life are probably far more evident in West Africa than are the free movements in trade and in things that we should be encouraging on the economic and the political side.

As we solve, or get close to solving, a problem in one theatre, the risk is that one simply displaces the problem to the neighbour next door. There is a need for synergies of United Nations operations to actually be harnessed, especially in terms of peacekeeping — I apply that in terms of reserves, in terms of flexibility of deployment. There is a lot more that we should be looking at.

There is also a need for consistency — consistency between what is done in one country and what is done next door. We see the consequences and the distortions which happen in terms of payments for weapons handed in, in terms of handling disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), if there is not a coherence — hence the wisdom of the approach.

If I may, I should like to specifically address the subject of small arms and light weapons, to which the report rightly gives prominence. But in West Africa, as elsewhere, this scourge is both a feature of conflict and instability and the main source of that conflict. We should remember, as we address the grave problems that Africa confronts in terms of disease and other issues, this year of all years, that, actually, as many people die from small arms in Africa as from any other cause. That is the reality. The international community for too long has addressed this problem more in a rhetorical fashion than substantially; that has to change.

Let me suggest four priorities. First, United Nations missions need to be equipped, in terms of mandate and resources, better to monitor and implement arms embargoes, and, where we have imposed an embargo, we have to will the means as well as the end.

Secondly, we should agree and implement United Nations proposals for the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons used in peacekeeping, and then go beyond that to negotiate a binding international instrument to enable States to identify and trace all illicit small arms and light weapons.

Thirdly, we should agree international controls on the transfer of those weapons by the next United Nations review meeting in 2006 at the latest.

Fourthly and lastly, we should work towards the goal of an arms trade treaty to extend and entrench the international rule of law on conventional arms generally.

If I could now turn to DDR, a key issue. The report's findings on youth unemployment and the link to recruitment by armed groups are very striking. That aspect needs to be tackled if we are going to have any prospect of sustainable peace. Case by case, DDR is essential to actually develop sustainable peace and the rule of law.

So what do we need? We need efforts by the United Nations Office in West Africa (UNOWA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), ECOWAS and some others towards a more coherent approach to address this problem regionally. It is an area where donors can make a particularly important contribution, because, unless we fund the reintegration and rehabilitation in time of ex-combatants, what we face is a recurrence of conflict.

If I can think laterally and forward for a moment, one of the key proposals in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is to establish a peacebuilding commission. I should just like to invite us all to think how a peacebuilding commission could actually help West Africa. It seems to me that it is the best example of why we need such a commission, why we need to harness all the efforts of the international actors, the different constituents of the United Nations family, and say, this is what we are going to do to promote sustainable peace and development in post-conflict situations.

And I would go beyond that and say, as we look at countries in West Africa — again, as mentioned in earlier briefings — if I take Guinea-Bissau, where we were all struck by our experience there in June, and if one were to say to the Government of Guinea-Bissau today that "There is a peacebuilding commission in place, it addresses the problems that you confront, and, actually, if you like, although you are not in a classic post-conflict situation, would you like to be the subject of a concerted effort by the peacebuilding commission and the Bretton Woods institutions and everyone else to try to tackle your problems?" I have no doubt what the response of the Government would be.

One of the other reasons for this commission is, very simply, that, actually, those countries that lack an evident sponsor, that are, if you like, the orphans of the international community — they need somewhere to go, and the peacebuilding commission seems to be, to the British Government, one of the best ways that we can address these concerns.

In conclusion, can I say that out of this report, out of this discussion, out of the mission, there is encouragement, I think, to us all that cooperation and coordination is actually becoming the norm, but that we must do better and build upon that. In welcoming that, may I pay particular tribute to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and to the African Union, to commend them for what they do and for the singular leadership that they are showing.

I will end by referring to one situation, picking up on what the Secretary-General said earlier. ECOWAS and the African Union have had the courage to take a stance on Togo. The Secretary-General has done so on several occasions. Yet the Council has been silent. We have said nothing on Togo. The question the Council must ask itself — this year, of all years, as we approach a summit — is, when do the situation and the developments in a country actually justify the involvement of the Security Council? Is the failure of a Government to protect its citizens a grossly unconstitutional act? Whatever the circumstances, is such failure a basis for the Council to say, "We ought to stand up and be counted"? Or is the traditional view of national sovereignty and non-interference to be exercised without qualification, without regard to developments in the real world? Does that mean that the Council then must stand silent on these issues, or do we have an obligation in terms of international peace and security actually to stand up? I am quite clear for myself what the answer is.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I would like to welcome you, Mr. Minister, and to thank you for coming to New York, despite a very busy schedule and the long distance, to preside personally over today's very important meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his presence and for his statement to the Council.

I listened attentively to the briefings by Mr. Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, and by Mr. Diouf, representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and I thank them for their presentations.

We are pleased to note that, since last year's open Security Council meeting (see S/PV.4933) and presidential statement (S/PRST/2004/7) on cross-border problems in West Africa, some very positive developments have taken place in that region. Cross-border problems have been the object of the full attention of the countries concerned. In addition, coordination and collaboration among entities of the United Nations system, subregional organizations such as ECOWAS, the countries in that region and donor countries have been strengthened. The reactivation of the Mano River Union gives cause for hope. ECOWAS has established its Small Arms Control Programme to combat the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. The peace processes in Sierra Leone and Liberia have also made headway. All those developments have created favourable conditions for resolution of cross-border problems.

China appreciates the positive efforts made by all parties and calls upon the international community to provide further assistance. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that, because of their complexity and their interconnected nature, cross-border problems in West Africa remain very serious and have taken a toll on the peace and stability of the area.

Some of the current issues are: the essentially uncurbed illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons; the use of child soldiers and mercenaries; lack of resources for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes; the recessive economic situation that has led to very high youth unemployment; and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in certain areas.

Some countries have been unable to break the impasse in their peace processes. The chaotic flows of refugees that have long been troubling the area have not eased. We believe that the solution of cross-border problems in West Africa ultimately depends on domestic stability in the countries concerned.

We support the West African countries in their efforts to adopt measures to promote the peace process

and to achieve substantive results. At the same time, in the light of their internal situations, genuinely effective measures must be adopted and the breeding grounds for cross-border problems must be eliminated. Here, we must proceed from the regional perspective and adopt integrated strategies.

We encourage subregional organizations such as ECOWAS and the Mano River Union to play their role, and we call upon the international community to provide financial support to aid them in capacity-building. The international community should also address and resolve the root causes of cross-border problems. The basic way to achieve lasting peace in West Africa is to promote comprehensive and sustainable social and economic development in order to solve the ever-worsening problem of high youth unemployment and to address and resolve the serious humanitarian problems in that area.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/86) and the outcome of the Security Council mission to West Africa have yielded many helpful recommendations for settlement of cross-border problems. They merit serious study by the parties involved with a view to their implementation.

In order to solve cross-border problems in West Africa, the help of the international community, especially that of the United Nations, is essential. We agree that the United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in the area should strengthen their coordination. We hope that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa will play a coordinating role. We agree that the consolidated appeals process for West Africa should focus this year on alleviating the ever-worsening humanitarian and security situation in the subregion.

I reaffirm that China is ready to make joint efforts with the rest of the international community to promote a satisfactory solution of cross-border problems in West Africa at an early date.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to thank you, Mr. Minister, for having organized this very important public debate on the progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86).

It hardly needs to be said that those problems exacerbate the region's chronic instability. Their persistence threatens to undermine ongoing efforts to restore peace in countries in conflict situations and to build peace in countries that have recently emerged from conflict. Hence, we must attach great importance to these key issues for peace, stability and development in the subregion.

This annual gathering gives us the opportunity to take stock of the strategies agreed to and the means mobilized for their implementation. From that standpoint, the report of the Secretary-General is a valuable analytical tool which enables us to assess actions that have been undertaken so as to draw the necessary conclusions and make the needed adjustments.

It seems to us that significant progress has been achieved in the area of the diagnosis and understanding of cross-border problems which, as is well known, fuel, and are fuelled by, instability and conflict. Also, much progress has been made in preparing and refining strategies and programmes in response to those scourges.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, however, there are shortfalls in the means available for action. Our future efforts therefore need to be directed towards strengthening the capacities of national and subregional organizations involved in the struggle and towards the mobilization of the significant necessary resources. In that regard, the report outlines a plan of action for achieving those objectives by promoting partnership.

It must be recognized that commendable efforts have been made by the United Nations system, among others, to build the capacities of subregional organizations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union, States and civil society, so as better to prepare them to play a lead role in action to address those problems. The launch of regional policies — in the context, inter alia, of ECOWAS, in coordination with and the with the support of United Nations agencies and institutions — in the areas of humanitarian affairs, conflict prevention, the free movement of goods and peoples, the phenomenon of roadblocks, child protection and support for civil society are bold projects deserving of the international community's support.

Institutional capacity-building and strengthening the means of subregional organizations must go hand

in hand with a similar effort on behalf of States that assume the responsibility of implementing policies of cooperation. One important aspect of such assistance is, quite clearly, reform of the security sector, which bears the difficult and delicate task of combating illicit trafficking in weapons, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the monitoring of arms embargoes, and border control and security, among other things.

Support for local actors also involves the provision of technical assistance in the harmonization of the legislative framework at the subregional level, which is vital in order to address cross-border issues effectively and in a coordinated manner. It goes without saying that harmonization should also involve United Nations-sponsored missions and programmes. Significant efforts have already been made to improve cooperation and coordination among the United Nations peace missions in the subregion. Moreover, the strengthening of the United Nations Office for West Africa has allowed it to play its full role in designing policies and coordinating their implementation on the ground.

Much has been said of the importance of addressing the problems associated with disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes in the context of a regional perspective. While the relevance of such an approach is self-evident, its practical implementation is no easy matter. We must therefore pursue and expand our thinking about the possibilities of designing and implementing regional plans of action.

Cross-border problems are complex in nature and must be tackled as part of an integrated and multidimensional approach. While the struggle against those evils is certainly the primary responsibility of the States of the region, it nonetheless presents a challenge to the international community as a whole. The countries of the region cannot win their battle against the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons or the use of mercenaries without the assistance of external partners. The problem of refugees, the reintegration of former combatants, the resettlement of displaced persons and youth unemployment all require significant resources, and their resolution is bound up with the establishment of conditions conducive to sustainable economic development.

The challenges facing West Africa are difficult, but they are not insurmountable provided the development partners demonstrate political will. The conditions are, in fact, in place to create partnership relations with the organizations and States of the subregion and the representatives of local communities. Such partnership can be established if we base our action on the priorities set by ECOWAS or within the context of the goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Thank you very much, Sir, for convening this important meeting. The situation in West Africa commands the ever-greater attention of the Council, since not only are States in the region suffering from years of conflict, but some may even relapse, and new crises are not excluded.

In that regard, we echo the calls made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, for all parties in Togo to exercise maximum restraint. We also commend the prompt reaction of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to preserve the democratic process in that country.

As we have stated time and again here in this Chamber, conflicts happen and recur for a reason; they are not self-generated explosions. They have immediate causes and they have root causes. One such cause, which should be placed at the top of the list, is poverty. The lack of means to lead a dignified life will leave people with nothing to lose. Violence has always been a last resort of the oppressed — oppressed by different ethnic or religious groups, by Governments and also by poverty, hunger and hopelessness.

The dire humanitarian situation still faced by the countries in conflict in West Africa must be addressed from an integrated and strategic long-term perspective that covers cross-border needs. The cross-border approach is of particular relevance in that context because problems and crime feed into each other from country to country across the porous borders of the region. Even when there is success in tackling them in one country, we cannot be effective if neighbouring countries are not being offered the same path. From international donors and humanitarian agents, we require not only the fulfilment of pledges under the consolidated appeals process, but also greater coordination so that efforts and resources are not wasted and valuable lives and human dignity are preserved.

We have been dealing with the particular situation of different countries in the region under four different items of the agenda of the Security Council. Since we are dealing specifically with cross-border issues in West Africa, I take this opportunity to centre my comments on two issues: small arms proliferation and reintegration.

There are still important loopholes in the international regime for the legal transfer of arms that allow for the diversion of arms to the illegal market, although we have been working over the years with like-minded delegations to minimize them. We are discussing the matter thoroughly in the Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly, and also took it up last week in the Council. In the regional context, we welcome recent initiatives taken by ECOWAS towards greater control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We particularly welcome the establishment of its Small Arms Control Programme, aimed at converting the ECOWAS moratorium into a legally binding instrument. We urge international partners and donors to offer technical assistance and support to ECOWAS efforts to reach that highly anticipated objective. South-South cooperation ought not be excluded either; there is a wide array of possible ways in which it can prove useful to developing countries.

We may be reaching the point where criminal activities, such as trafficking in small arms, linked to numerous violations of human rights and to the criminal exploitation of natural resources, may be subject to the proceedings of the International Criminal Court. They place a heavy burden on the integrity of human life and affront our ideals of peace.

The dignity of human life leads me to the other point I want to raise: the importance of reintegration and development initiatives to avoid the recurrence of conflict. My delegation is truly heartened by the attention given in the report of the Secretary-General before us to the question of reintegration programmes and the absolute need to generate economic activity in order to ensure sustainable peace. We fully subscribe to the assessment made by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 27 to 30 of his report, on the importance of reintegration, with specific attention to child and female ex-combatants and to youth unemployment. We are particularly pleased by the ongoing collaboration between the United Nations Office for West Africa and the International Labour Organization — working with other United Nations entities and the Economic Community of West African States, civil society and the private sector — to devise a regional strategy to address youth unemployment. We note that fair trade for African commodities remains elusive; that issue will have to be urgently tackled in the appropriate forums.

We have to find durable solutions to the lack of economic development — and I mean not only by attracting foreign investment and generating jobs, but also by promoting sustainable income-generating activities and training for self-employment. The news that the United Nations Mission in Liberia is mapping women's organizations involved in small businesses is a very positive development. We expect that that exercise will bear fruit in terms of offering needed support and training.

The delegation of Brazil would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the recommendation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to establish a peacebuilding commission in the United Nations. The matter should rightly be discussed in the General Assembly, but the idea itself — that peacebuilding must command greater attention — is a very welcome one. Whatever decisions are taken in the General Assembly, it has already been demonstrated that we can benefit from greater cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council under Article 65 of the Charter. Even if one were to consider it from a strictly utilitarian perspective, it is not useful for the Organization to invest so much in peacekeeping and in disarming and demobilizing combatants if we do not do enough to remove the temptation of power and the stimulation conferred by the possession of weapons and to avert vicious behaviour towards other human beings. We need a more comprehensive approach to armed conflict. It is not a purely military matter, and it is certainly not confined within borders.

I would like to say one final word to commend the increasing efforts undertaken by United Nations missions in the region to work together and to build a constructive partnership, as referred to by the Special Representative. I thank him and his Office for their leadership in a very challenging environment. That is the right path to follow. On that path, we must increase our efforts to achieve an all-encompassing understanding of conflict and to take action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania welcomes the progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86). That ongoing effort makes it clear that the challenges facing West Africa are not unique to that region. We must all therefore have a greater interest in finding practical and sustainable solutions to the perils that afflict the African continent.

The West African subregion is a geographical entity that has reached a significant high level of integration in Africa, with a common purpose and shared concerns. The subregion's community of nations offers a framework for subregional cooperation and a reference point for the African Union and the rest of the international community, including the United Nations, to work with. It is in that context that we have a platform to discuss a regional approach to cross-border issues and problems in West Africa, which should be encouraged and replicated in other parts of Africa.

The internal conflict in Liberia, which began in December 1989, triggered a chain of events in other parts of the subregion. For it is true that internal conflicts — whether involving various ethnic, religious or political groupings within one country or cross-border national clashes across borders — have contributed to a growing number of civilians being caught up in fighting and have pushed many internally displaced persons into unsafe areas or forced them to flee their own countries to neighbouring countries in search of safety. That movement away from conflict areas also risks inciting upheavals in other areas or exacerbating existing or simmering conflicts.

In the United Republic of Tanzania we know too well that exiles and refugees sometimes seek to become active in conflicts in the areas to which they have been displaced and to influence political events at home. Sometimes they turn the violence they have witnessed or perpetrated on the people and country that have provided them with succour and sanctuary. Those negative and destructive dynamics need to be contained and reversed. West Africa has experienced that cycle of violence and its attendant instability.

It is in that sense that the mixed picture of the situation in West Africa presented by the Secretary-General cannot be too comforting. Progress towards sustainable peace in the region remains critical. Achievements in Liberia, where it all started, as well as in Sierra Leone, offer us great hope. But the situation in the Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau and the recent events in Togo are a source of continuing concern. The efforts by the United Nations Office for West Africa, subregional organizations, United Nations entities and civil society organizations need to be commended and supported.

West Africa has demonstrated remarkable leadership in Africa in the areas of conflict resolution and the maintenance of regional peace and security. In recognition of that, it needs the support of the international community if it is to overcome the challenges it continues to face. The report highlights the pressing need to harmonize disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, with specific reference to programmes for women and children. In a region whose borders have historically been porous and are now becoming increasingly open as a result of the process of integration, no single country can overcome that challenge. The United Nations — and, indeed, the international community as a whole — must facilitate and support that process.

In a zone where combatants continuously circulate across borders and where there is a constant flux of refugees and returnees, it is only through an effective regional approach to DDR that we can we hope to contain the negative region-wide effects that are likely to result from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. At the same time, in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, where refugees are ready to return, they should be helped to integrate and to participate in post-conflict peacebuilding.

Tanzania notes the encouraging steps that the members of the Mano River Union have taken to set up effective mechanisms for consultation and control, notably on ways to deal with mercenaries. We welcome further efforts to determine practical ways to promote the building of confidence, peace and stability in the subregion in line with the Security Council's call on the Mano River States to resume dialogue. In that regard, we commend the role of the United Nations Office for West Africa and call for more sustained efforts, including continued contributions, to improve the capacity of the Economic Community of West

African States in the area of crisis management and to address the problem of youth unemployment as a factor of instability in the subregion, in collaboration with civil society organizations.

In many respects, many of the cross-border problems facing West Africa — and, indeed, Africa as a whole — are also related to issues pertaining to approaches to development. There are practical contributions that a focus on development can offer in addressing those phenomena. Development policies must seek to shape conditions in the region that foster growth in terms of constitutional structures, functioning State institutions and the emergence of the rule of law. The advanced regional institutions which ECOWAS has evolved so far offer a convenient policy framework and programmes for development partners to contribute to national development and regional integration.

The Millennium Development Goals stress that good governance is one of the critical factors in promoting stability and thus in fighting poverty and insecurity. Conflicts are unlikely to occur when people are satisfied with their governance structures. We note with great interest the measures which are being taken at the national and regional levels in West Africa to institutionalize democracy, the rule of law and good governance at all levels.

The aspirations of the people of West Africa to live in peace, security and prosperity deserve our full support. The Security Council must leave no doubt that they have its support. Tanzania fully subscribes to the draft presidential statement presented to the Council by Benin.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We are again honoured by your presence, Mr. Minister. We congratulate you, and we thank you and your delegation for convening this important meeting to discuss ways and means to address cross-border issues in West Africa.

We also welcome the comprehensive briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and by the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

We share the Secretary-General's assessment that the situation in West Africa is a mixed picture of positive developments and continuing challenges. One of the significant developments is the increased collaboration among the United Nations presences in West Africa: UNOWA, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. This includes regular meetings among the heads of the five peacekeeping and political missions to promote joint planning and strengthen opportunities for regional cooperation. At the operational level, we note the meetings of the force commanders of the three peacekeeping operations. Inter-mission cooperation at that level maximizes the operational capability of the United Nations on the ground and creates synergies, which gets the job done more efficiently and saves on costs. We welcome the establishment of an inter-mission secretariat to coordinate the meetings, and we look forward to the forthcoming report on inter-mission cooperation, which will provide details on information sharing, joint use of mission assets and logistics. We also commend UNOWA for the specific work it has done to raise public awareness about subregional and cross-border problems by undertaking field missions to sensitive areas not covered by the mandates of peacekeeping operations and by developing mechanisms and enhancing linkages with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and other international partners. We reiterate our support for UNOWA and for the recommendations that have been made to strengthen it.

The contributions of ECOWAS and the newly reactivated Mano River Union also deserve attention and recognition. We have been informed that ECOWAS and UNOWA have developed a detailed work programme of cooperation which includes priority projects on security sector reform and electoral assistance and a regional strategy for addressing youth unemployment. We hope that this institutionalized cooperation will yield great benefits in the field. The next summit meeting of the Mano River Union countries, to be held later this year, will continue the momentum that has already been generated.

My delegation also recognizes the important role played by civil society in addressing subregional and cross-border issues. Aside from disseminating information and raising awareness, they play an

integral part in post-conflict peacebuilding with their established networks for the actual implementation of programmes in the field. UNOWA has been actively engaging members of civil society in its work by inviting them to meetings with United Nations partners, as well as by informing and consulting them when going on field missions. We support that type of collaboration and hope that it can be expanded in the future.

Three specific issues and challenges should be highlighted: the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; harmonization of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes; and focusing on post-conflict peacebuilding. My delegation welcomes ECOWAS efforts in implementing its moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms, through the establishment of a small arms unit and the adoption of its Small Arms Control Programme. We hope that ECOWAS will further strengthen the intent of the moratorium by transforming it into a legally binding instrument.

The need to harmonize DDR programmes was addressed by the Security Council mission to West Africa in June 2004 when its members held intensive discussions with their interlocutors on the ground. We note that the resulting workshops came up with a set of policy recommendations and practical guidelines on a regional DDR programme in West Africa and that the participating national commissions on DDR established a network for regular exchange of experiences. My delegation hopes that the Secretariat can brief us regularly on developments on this issue.

Emphasis should be placed also on post-conflict peacebuilding. Addressing the root causes of conflict as a preventive strategy and properly addressing post-conflict challenges deserve equal, if not greater, attention. Jobs and economic opportunities are essential elements for lasting peace as they address related problems such as refugee crises, high youth unemployment and other social and economic ills.

Like Brazil and the United Kingdom, we consider that the suggestion by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change relating to the establishment of a peacebuilding commission to address precisely those issues deserves support.

In conclusion, my delegation underscores the need for subregional and cross-border issues to be addressed in a comprehensive manner and stresses the great importance of that approach. Best practices a lessons learned from ECOWAS countries could w serve as examples and could migrate to other regi and subregions.

We commend your delegation, Mr. President, drafting a presidential statement on this subject, wh we support and which we hope will be adopted at end of this meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank representative of the Philippines for the kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke Russian*): We are happy, Mr. Minister, to see y presiding over the work of the Security Council tod and we welcome your delegation's contribution to consideration of this item.

Consideration of the subject under discussion the Security Council today clearly shows that in W Africa there is great potential for subregional a cross-border problems that pose a threat to the pea and security of the continent, to the integrity of States and to the prosperity and lives of its people. T ongoing conflicts in the region, the activities of illeg armed groups, the proliferation of small arms and lig weapons, attempts to seize power by unconstitutio means, trans-border crime, the use of mercenaries a child soldiers, the issue of refugees and internal displaced persons: those are all negative factors wi an extremely tragic impact on the situation both West Africa and in the continent as a whole.

Our delegation has repeatedly stressed that long-term solution to the complex African crisis can found only through a comprehensive, holistic approa combining coordinated action by Member State organizations of the United Nations syste subregional organizations, the international don community and bilateral and multilateral developme partners.

We have carefully studied the report of t Secretary-General before us today (S/2005/86). recommendations are comprehensive and, on t whole, consistent with the goal of neutralizing the ma cross-border problems of West Africa throug comprehensive strategies to resolve problems in bord areas, security sector reform, programmes disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR the conversion of the Economic Community of We

African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on small arms and light weapons into a legally binding convention, the creation a subregional register of small arms and light weapons and the reintegration of former combatants and child soldiers.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the primary responsibility for carrying out these programmes should lie with the African States themselves. However, we cannot fail to recognize the insufficient logistic and financial assistance that countries of West Africa are receiving for that purpose from the international donor community and from financial institutions.

We are pleased to note the beginning of the implementation of recommendations of the Secretary-General which reflect ideas that the Russian delegation put forward during Council missions to West Africa and during the relevant thematic debates. The idea of creating national commissions to resolve the problem of child soldiers is gaining ground and national legislation to combat impunity is beginning to be modernized. It is important that this work be focused and that it yield tangible practical results.

We agree with the Secretary-General regarding the need to strengthen the borders of African States and to create joint security mechanisms in border areas. It is important — without prejudice to inter-State relations to trade and economic cooperation, to integration processes or to border contacts between people — that specific steps be taken along the borders to stop dangerous occurrences, such as the movement of illegal armed groups, the spillover of conflicts and the illegal export of natural resources.

We are pleased at the further development of close interaction among United Nations missions in neighbouring States of the subregion and at the coordinating role played here by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA). A clear example of that cooperation was the meeting that took place in December 2004 in Monrovia and the meeting, organized by UNOWA, of the heads of the five peacekeeping and political missions in West Africa, which considered practical issues and assessed subregional threats to the stability of the region. However, we would like to emphasize once again that coordinated action by United Nations forces in the subregion should not violate either the sovereignty of individual States or the mandates of individual peacekeeping operations.

One of the major components of the peace process in West Africa, without doubt, is the goal of improving political relations and pursuing confidence-building measures among the States of the Mano River Union. The summit meeting held on 20 May 2004 in Conakry among the leaders of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, with the participation of the President of Côte d'Ivoire, charted a course for creating effective mechanisms for consultation and for monitoring the resolution of trans-border problems, including in the area of combating mercenaries. We hope that those efforts will continue.

Russia views enhancing stability in Africa as an intrinsic part of the endeavour to establish, under United Nations auspices, a global system for countering new threats and challenges. Time does not stand still. Plans we outlined before to stabilize the West African region and to resolve cross-border problems are being implemented, although not at the pace we would like to see.

Much remains to be done. Child soldiers are resuming normal lives, but those who lured them into fighting have not been punished. The victims of gender-based violence are receiving assistance, but the rapists have not been prosecuted. Gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are continuing. The flow of illegal weapons that fuels African conflicts has not been halted. Imperfect legislation and poorly developed democratic institutions make unconstitutional regime changes possible. We need to give more thought to new ideas about how the Security Council can help West African States to strengthen their peace processes. We believe that work on such innovative ideas could take place in the Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me express my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. It is most appropriate that it is Benin that is guiding us through the challenges pertaining to cross-border issues in West Africa. I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the Representative of the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) for sharing their thoughts with us on this important matter.

I would like to associate myself with the statement to be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The violence, conflict and instability that haunt much of West Africa have taken a terrible toll in terms of lives and the welfare and development of the peoples of the subregion. It is therefore only appropriate that the Council, on a regular basis, should take stock of the problems of West Africa. In that regard, we thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2005/86).

We are pleased to note that some progress has been made towards peace, stability and democracy since the Council's last debate. Elections are scheduled for this year in three of the countries on the Council's agenda — events that could finally prove the power of the ballot over the bullet as a means of legitimate transfer of authority in that part of the world.

There are, however, numerous grounds for continued concern, not least the deteriorating situation in Côte d'Ivoire, which has strong repercussions in the whole region, such as stalling economic activity, reversing migrant flows and fuelling flows of refugees, increasing the use of mercenaries and the acceptance of impunity.

It is evident that the root causes of the conflicts have yet to be tackled, and equally evident that addressing the situation in individual countries in isolation will not bring lasting peace to West Africa. Together with other actors in the security, humanitarian and development fields, the Council must design its response to the conflicts within an overall subregional framework for joint and integrated action. Only in that way can we ensure that all the actors involved in conflict prevention in West Africa pull in the same direction and guarantee viable exit strategies. The forthcoming action plan by the United Nations Office in West Africa (UNOWA), ECOWAS and the EU will hopefully contribute to that end.

Against that background, let me briefly offer some thoughts on areas of action that we deem particularly important.

First, the strengthened African involvement in conflict prevention and management is to be welcomed and encouraged. The prompt and firm response of ECOWAS to the recent developments in Togo is a clear case in point and deserves our full support. Denmark firmly believes that African ownership and participation in conflict management should be further strengthened and encouraged. The Council should explore how to best support the ongoing efforts to build an African security architecture and should closely work with ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) to advance ways and means of cooperation. When we say this, it should not be misinterpreted as a way of extricating ourselves from the problems of the continent, but rather as evidence of our firm conviction that Africa needs home-grown solutions to its problems. The goal should be to establish efficient partnerships and an equitable division of labour between the United Nations and African organizations in accordance with their comparative advantages. To that end, ECOWAS and the AU should aim at further harmonizing their policies, institutions and activities, and should clearly indicate their focus areas.

Let me note that Denmark contributes actively to enhancing the capacity of African regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention not only through the European Union but also through substantial bilateral assistance. Thus, Denmark, through its Africa Programme for Peace, allocates €33 million to such activities.

Secondly, I would like to stress the continued role of United Nations missions in the region and the need to make the most of them. Many initiatives have been launched to increase the liaison across missions. We look forward to the specific report on inter-mission cooperation.

We strongly believe that more can still be done to join forces and pool assets across the United Nations missions in West Africa to better tackle cross-border issues. The effort to stop sanctions-busters, soldiers of fortune and mercenaries from operating across borders and taking their deadly business from one country to the next could be enhanced by, inter alia, mandating peace operations to engage in the monitoring and enforcement of sanctions, including joint cross-border controls. Further sharing of resources would free up capacity for other pressing tasks. With approximately 25,000 United Nations peacekeepers in the region, there should be room for economies of scale. We recognize the practical problems involved, but, instead

of being paralysed by such problems, we should stimulate new and constructive thinking.

Thirdly, with regard to specific areas of action, I would like to reiterate the calls for the development and dissemination of best practices for security sector reform, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. Experience in West Africa suggests that the choices made by security and armed actors in times of heightened political conflicts are crucial in determining whether or not States descend into chaos. Depoliticizing the role of security forces and subjecting them to democratic oversight are prerequisites for preventing new conflict and building peace.

The approach to security sector reform must go beyond regular military and police forces; it must also include Government-supported militias, irregular combatants and civil defence groups, and it must be tackled within the wider context of the judiciary and the legislature. The DDR processes in the region must be further harmonized. In that regard, we are pleased to note the plans of the Secretary-General. As we mentioned last week during the debate on small arms (see S/PV.5127), the possibility of funding a larger share of DDR-related activities in peace operations through assessed contributions should be approached with an open mind.

The DDR process should be tailored to specifically take into account the problem of children and discontented, disillusioned West African youth. Denmark strongly believes that that challenge must be addressed within the security-development nexus. There is a need to deal with both youngsters directly involved in fighting and minors who have been kept as sex objects and forced labourers by armed groups and who, in many instances, have ended up as victims of HIV/AIDS and illegal drugs. To counteract the ease with which youngsters are drawn directly or indirectly into the abyss of violence, looting and killing, national and external actors must carefully assist the young generation in building a civilian life where their potential can be released and their aspirations fulfilled. The young generation should be acknowledged as capable citizens and drawn into mainstream politics.

In conclusion, the clear interrelationship among the three themes that the Council has debated within the past six working days — small arms and light weapons, children and armed conflict and cross-border problems in West Africa — is worth noting. Each of the debates has made clear how security and development are closely interrelated. They have also made clear that the demand on national, subregional, regional and international actors to tackle the root causes of conflict in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular is mounting, not waning. An adequate response can be achieved only if all of us join forces in a common strategic approach. Denmark stands ready to do its share.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Denmark for the kind words she addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Oshima (Japan) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to thank you, Mr. Minister, for having taken the initiative of organizing this debate on subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. I am pleased to note the important role being played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in an effort to help countries emerge from conflict, to consolidate the peace achieved and to promote security and development in West Africa. In that context, my delegation assures you of our full support.

I also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, for the important report (S/2005/86) on this subject. We particularly appreciate the integrated approach, mentioned in the report, to the issues of humanitarian assistance zones, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, security sector reform and border control. The report addresses a variety of issues, but I would like to refer specifically to three points that we consider to be of particular concern: security issues, especially small arms and DDR; cooperation and coordination among United Nations missions; and governance.

First, I would like to discuss the issues of small arms and DDR. The Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons will be held this year, and the first review conference on that subject is scheduled for next year. It is our hope that the countries members of ECOWAS will make further progress towards implementing the Programme of Action prior to those meetings. As recommended in the Secretary-General's report, transforming the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms and light weapons into a

legally binding instrument could be an example of that kind of success, together with the establishment of the Small Arms Unit already created within the ECOWAS secretariat and further cooperation among the countries in the region to control the illicit flow of small arms in border areas. We hope that the moratorium will be further strengthened so that it can serve as a model for other regions on this issue. My Government has been playing a leading role here, and Japan's specific contributions in this area were outlined in our statement at last week's open debate on small arms. As indicated in our statement, my Government is determined to continue its contribution to the development of international frameworks on this issue and to the promotion of projects on the ground, such as the collection and destruction of illicit small arms.

Concerning the DDR process, it is particularly important to tackle the issue of reintegration, particularly the problem of youth unemployment, in order to avoid the recurrence of conflict. We welcome the conclusion of the disarmament and demobilization processes in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We look forward to further progress in collecting the small arms remaining in communities and to new progress in the reintegration phase in those countries. Japan has extended assistance of nearly $10 million for reintegration programmes in both countries, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and will continue to provide such assistance in future. Furthermore, the disarmament process in Côte d'Ivoire is facing difficulties. Since DDR is an important aspect of the peace process, we wish to ask all parties to the conflict to tackle that issue in good faith.

Secondly, I would like to touch on the question of coordination and cooperation among the United Nations missions. Since the United Nations missions in the region are playing a role more far-reaching than ever before, we must consider how best we can mobilize the limited resources available to the Organization. It is a positive development that the chiefs and force commanders of the five United Nations missions in the region are maintaining close communication and coordination with each other. We very much hope that this mutually cooperative relationship will be further promoted and at many levels. We believe that cooperation among the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in the area of border control is of special importance.

UNAMSIL will be withdrawn at the end of this year, and we need to keep that in mind when considering what form future cooperation could take among United Nations missions in West Africa. Controlling Sierra Leone's borders with its neighbours, particularly Liberia, will be a special challenge, and we hope that the Government of Sierra Leone will continue to play an important role through its cooperation with the relevant United Nations missions such as UNMIL.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, it is encouraging that this year's consolidated appeals process for West Africa is focusing on preventing any deterioration in the human security situation in the region and that close cooperation is occurring among the various actors in the field, such as coordinated group meetings organized by the Secretariat's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Japan is contributing actively in the area of refugees and food assistance, amounting to $120 million since 2000.

Thirdly, I wish to speak of governance. Recently we witnessed an unconstitutional transfer of power in Togo. That runs counter to the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and ECOWAS to prevent the seizure of power by such methods, as described in the report of the Secretary-General. We pay tribute to the ECOWAS efforts to find a solution to this issue, and we very much hope they will lead to an early and peaceful settlement in accordance with the will of the Togolese people.

We fully share the view of the Secretary-General that "the primary responsibility for promoting peace in the region rests with West African leaders and communities themselves". One of the important pillars of Japan's policy towards Africa is the consolidation of peace through ownership by the African countries themselves. My Government highly appreciates the fact that in that spirit African nations and organizations have been increasingly exercising their ownership in resolving conflicts in the region in recent years. It is also encouraging that through public information activities and education, civil society, United Nations missions and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) are implementing their programmes at the grass-roots level in order to promote peace and security.

We are expecting important elections this year in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. We hope they will be conducted successfully through the exercise of ownership by those three countries, with the necessary assistance provided by the international community. My Government is prepared to continue providing assistance in a positive spirit to the efforts to consolidate peace and development in West African countries.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the representative of Japan for the kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I wish to thank Benin for putting this important subject on the agenda. The United States appreciates the thorough work done in the report of the Secretary-General. We recognize that this is a complicated issue, and we commend the efforts under way to address these difficult problems.

We welcome the increasing cooperation on cross-border issues among the United Nations missions in the region, particularly among the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and the other missions, as well as the enhanced level of coordination in patrolling in the vulnerable border areas. That approach makes sense and is the best possible and most efficient use of material and resources.

Similarly, we welcome the emphasis on developing cooperation between civil society groups across borders, as well as United Nations coordination with regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union. We encourage private sector collaborations in order to continue to build peace and stability in West Africa. Reactivation of the Mano River Union may also provide opportunities to develop practical ways to promote greater peace and stability in the region.

Many good points have been made this morning, so I will just touch on a few specific aspects of the report.

As noted in our recent statement on children affected by armed conflict, the United States understands the tragic consequences suffered by children affected by those conflicts and welcomes the development of effective and harmonized disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies in West Africa, particularly where children are involved. However, we note that funding for such programmes remains a challenge. The United States, like many other nations, is studying the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and believes that each recommendation, including those regarding funding, needs to be weighed carefully with the goal of achieving broad consensus on measures that will produce increased efficiency while addressing the central problem at hand.

We endorse the need for greater security sector reform and underline the need for the creation of democratic, professional security forces, drawn from all groups in various societies. We also support the Secretary-General's commitment to stop continuing violations against children, including recruitment or use of child soldiers in violation of applicable law, unwarranted attacks on schools and hospitals and the maiming and killing of children. That includes rape and sexual violence and unwarranted denial of humanitarian access to children.

As last week's Council meeting on small arms and light weapons demonstrated, there is a need to address the fact that destabilizing, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has proven a major obstacle to peace, to economic development and to efforts to rebuild war-torn societies. We commend the work of ECOWAS in that field, and we support efforts to strengthen the Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa.

The United States also believes in accountability and holding accountable those individuals who commit crimes, and we note the report's mention of the occurrence of trafficking in arms, natural resources and human beings. We continue to have a different view, perhaps, with regard to the most appropriate forums in which to hear those particular cases.

Finally, I wish to say that we salute the efforts of all the peacekeepers and United Nations personnel involved in West Africa, and we also note the tragic reports coming in today of the loss of life among peacekeepers in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our hearts go out to them.

Once again we thank you, Mr. President, for bringing this subject to our attention.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): First of all, I would like to express our appreciation to you personally, Mr. President, and to the Government of Benin for giving the item on cross-border issues in West Africa high priority on the agenda, thus underscoring the serious concern about the threat to regional peace and stability posed by cross-border problems and trans-national illegal activities.

Greece welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and wishes to express its appreciation for the analysis of the main challenges and the relevant recommendations contained therein.

I would also like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his effective efforts in addressing the issue, and the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for his insightful comments.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement to be made at a later stage by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Civil conflicts and their severe humanitarian impact, the subsequent flow of refugees, the increasing use of mercenaries and child soldiers, the proliferation of small arms, the mismanagement of natural resources, failed economies and endemic corruption are prominent among the factors contributing to instability and requiring a wider and multifaceted approach covering the entire region. The development of a comprehensive regional approach to deal with those issues is a priority goal of increasing importance and could also contribute to treating the interlinked root causes of the region's complex problems.

The victims of today's conflicts in West Africa have been predominantly civilians, regardless of their nationality. Improving regional integration and cooperation in all areas of conflict management, conflict prevention and peacebuilding will therefore be of significant benefit to the well-being of the people of the whole region.

West Africa should be a high priority for all. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, while several States in the region have already embarked on a serious effort towards economic and democratic reform, there are still others where conflict persists, threatening the stability and security of all. Addressing, in an effective manner, the longstanding structural macro-economic, human rights and governance failure has therefore taken on new and more urgent meaning.

African ownership of the whole endeavour is a basic element of our approach. West African States should be helped to enhance their capacity to pursue policies aimed at social and economic development in order to eliminate the possibility of future conflicts.

Turning to specific cross-border issues, it is development which provides a guarantee for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants into society and for finding lasting solutions to youth unemployment, thus eliminating the risk of ex-soldiers' being recruited once again by parties to a conflict.

Greece welcomes the call for a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) plan of action, made at Dakar in August 2004 by United Nations peace missions, United Nations agencies and other development partners.

We also acknowledge that the illegal trafficking of arms poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the region, and we affirm our support for the strict implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We also welcome the extension for three more years of the ECOWAS moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms and light weapons and encourage the efforts being made to transform it into a legally binding instrument.

We believe that, by publicly naming those who violate the arms embargo and the ECOWAS moratorium in order to bring them to justice, we would not only demonstrate our determination to reinforce the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council, but also create a factor of deterrence for those who might wish to violate them in the future.

The Secretary-General's report therefore rightly points out that the subregion continues to be confronted by the phenomenon of violent military adventurism aimed at seizing power, which constitutes a threat to stability and hinders the process of peacebuilding in individual West African countries.

Greece therefore strongly supports the initiatives taken by ECOWAS and United Nations agencies in West Africa in introducing integrated policies to

reform the security sector, thus enhancing stability and democratic governance in the region.

My Government, recognizing the efforts made by ECOWAS, has recently made a substantial offer in order to promote ECOWAS activities. We will continue to do so to the extent of our ability. Moreover, as a member of the European Union, Greece has been actively contributing to overall efforts for peace, stability and development in the region.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate our strong conviction that only through a close and coordinated partnership of all those involved, including civil society, will it be possible for the international community to reconcile immediate requirements with long-term goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Greece for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the fact that the Benin presidency decided to convene this open debate today on the problems of West Africa, and we thank you for this, Mr. Minister. We would like also to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his presence, which attests to the importance of the issue. We welcome also the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, and of the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We thank them for their contributions to our debate, and I will come back to some of the points they made.

Last year the Council met at a time when hope was emerging in West Africa. Now, unfortunately, we must acknowledge that the situation is still very fragile and that there are potential crises undermining its stability and development. The Secretary-General earlier painted a gloomy picture of the situation, and I certainly support what he said in that regard.

I wish to address two situations that are of great concern to us.

First, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire is very disquieting, as the electoral deadline is approaching. France, like the Security Council, unreservedly supports President Mbeki's mediation efforts through the African Union. Côte d'Ivoire is a great country in the heart of West Africa. It must absolutely return to the path of peace and reconciliation. It is in its interest and in the interest of the whole region, and hence of all Africa.

I am thinking also of the situation in Togo. There the assistance and efforts of ECOWAS and of the African Union will be decisive in bringing about — as my country has consistently strongly emphasized — the restoration of constitutional order and the holding of free and transparent elections.

It is clear that the courageous determination of the African organizations is the main factor in ensuring stability in the subregion and in the continent as a whole. We must continue to support the activities of African countries themselves as they work for peace, development and prosperity on their continent.

The African Union's Peace and Security Council is now a full partner of the Security Council, which itself devotes a great part of its work to Africa, and in particular West Africa. Each, of course, has its own role and functions, but our activities must be complementary.

Nor can I overlook the fact that, in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the African States have chosen further to develop their collective action in favour of peace and security and, towards that end, to enhance their institutional and operational capacities.

All these initiatives attest to the fact that the African countries have taken stock of the challenges facing their continent and that they are resolved to tackle those challenges themselves. It is, of course, incumbent on the international community to support those efforts and France, for its part, will continue to lend them its full support.

In order to be fully effective, the mobilization of the international community must not be confined to sporadic assistance to individual countries facing crisis. In the long term, it must benefit the entire subregion. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/86) is a useful contribution in terms of that approach. Here, the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Ould-Abdallah should also be commended.

The report contains a large number of specific recommendations. Without going into detail I would like to highlight a few points. First, we see a pressing need to end the trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the recruitment of mercenaries and child

soldiers, which destabilize entire countries and destroy the futures of many individuals. It is incumbent upon all States of the region to tackle those issues. Responsibility lies also with all other States concerned with the export, brokering or financing of such trafficking.

The resolve of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to replace the 1998 moratorium on small arms and light weapons with a truly binding instrument is, we believe, a promising step. ECOWAS knows it may rely on the support of the European Union in achieving that objective, as the representative of Luxembourg will state on behalf of the European Union presidency.

France also supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations be given the means to guarantee respect for arms embargoes. We are convinced that that would be a useful investment. Ensuring respect for arms embargoes today means avoiding the outbreak of hostilities tomorrow.

Security sector reform, also addressed in the Secretary-General's recommendations, will be a key element for the stability of the countries of the region. It will ensure that the rule of law prevails, prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and promote respect for human rights.

With the assistance of the international community, the countries of the region should pool their efforts in order to better control their borders, dismantle illegal roadblocks which hinder the free movement of people and goods, combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources, ensure security in refugee camps and combat trafficking in narcotics.

We believe that there are a number of other points which could be used to support the recommendations of the Secretary-General, and we propose two. Why not consider a regional embargo on arms intended for the use of non-State actors? In addition, could we not assist the countries of the region to strengthen their control over their national resources, with support from United Nations peace operations or other specific mechanisms?

My country attaches particular importance to settlement of the crises in West Africa. But, as the report of the Secretary-General makes clear, the future of the subregion lies in the hands of African leaders themselves. We can only encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, ECOWAS and the African Union to continue their remarkable efforts to work together with the region's stakeholders to combat the scourges that have, for so long, been besetting West Africa.

Before I conclude, I would like to note that my delegation has just learned of the death of nine Blue Helmets in Ituri. We are shocked by their deaths and by the fate of the injured — I think that some 11 people were injured in the attack. This reminds us of the danger faced by peacekeepers as they carry out their mission. We pay tribute to them and await a report from the Secretariat on the circumstances of this tragedy.

I would like to convey our condolences to the authorities and the people of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been making a very significant contribution to the Organization's peacekeeping forces, and my delegation is particularly affected by this tradgedy.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his solid progress report on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86). We appreciate the presence and the valuable contributions of the Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

Romania associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Ambassador Hoscheit of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report, West Africa still presents a mixed picture. Encouraging news of progress and prospects for peace and development are counterbalanced by chronic and pervasive socio-economic problems and worrisome political developments. We are all alarmed by the recent developments in Togo, and we are fully behind the actions taken by ECOWAS and the African Union.

Lingering crises such as the one in Côte d'Ivoire also offer reasons for deep concern, as negative

developments in any West African country may easily have a broader impact. West Africa is probably one of the best examples of the need for a comprehensive and harmonized approach to conflict situations. The important investment the international community has made in individual countries could be wasted if the many cross-border problems calling for durable solutions in the larger regional framework are ignored. We need a long-term process, as the level of commitment should measure up to the profile of the region which is emerging from decades of war and instability.

The report of the Secretary-General offers a pragmatic view on steps already taken or still required to tackle the cross-border problems affecting West Africa.

Against that backdrop, we would like to make three general points. First, we note with appreciation the trend towards greater coordination within the United Nations system. In that regard, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on inter-mission cooperation in West Africa.

Secondly, as Romania resolutely advocates closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, we appreciate, in particular, the spearheading role that ECOWAS is playing in West Africa as a relevant and successful partner of the United Nations. ECOWAS is actively involved in the implementation of many of the Security Council's recommendations. We hail in particular the increased cooperation among the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), ECOWAS and the European Union, with the goal of developing a regional conflict prevention policy. We trust that the United Nations Office will continue to work towards ensuring the necessary regional coherence in the wide-ranging activities in West Africa.

International and regional efforts must certainly be backed by fundamental political changes at the national level in areas such as participatory decision-making, transparent and accountable governance and administration, and fighting impunity and corruption. Solutions to West African cross-border issues are ultimately a function of the efforts of the regional countries themselves — their leaders and civil societies alike. Efforts aimed at reactivating the Mano River Union could be worthwhile in countering cross-border threats. The Union could also offer new possibilities to tackle the issue of sensitive border areas.

Thirdly, cross-border problems, such as illicit trafficking in arms, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and the phenomena of child soldiers and mercenaries cannot be truly dealt with in the absence of viable prerequisites for development. The United Nations achievements are more than a function of security gains. The importance of a successful reintegration phase in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, as well as the creation of adequate job opportunities for young people, including ex-combatants, cannot be overstated as critical steps towards stable and peaceful societies. We still need to figure out better ways to articulate a meaningful cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council with respect to post-conflict situations. The donor community and such international institutions as the World Bank should also step up their efforts to help national authorities and regional actors in that direction.

Finally, I would like to make four brief comments building upon the specific recommendations that the Secretary-General made.

First, the reform of the security sector in West African countries, as well as improved relations between civil and military structures, are vital conditions in order to achieve stability in the subregion. There will be no lasting peace so long as State policies can be dictated at gunpoint.

Secondly, we welcome the decision of the ECOWAS member States to convert the moratorium on small arms and lights weapons into a legally binding instrument, and we encourage them also to consider the setting up of a regional register of small arms and light weapons.

Thirdly, the implementation of sanctions regimes should be conceived in the same regional logic. A "naming and shaming" list could also be a powerful tool in achieving compliance with arms embargoes and the ECOWAS moratorium.

Fourthly, in many areas of West Africa the humanitarian situation remains a great concern, with considerable potential to affect the stability of the entire subregion. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's appeal to fund a regional humanitarian response, with special emphasis on sensitive border

areas affected by conflict and on their major problems: the recruitment of child soldiers, widespread instances of rape, illicit trafficking in drugs and weapons, and banditry.

With general elections planned in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau, 2005 is an electoral year for West Africa. These are opportunities for the whole region to set a steady course towards political stability, national reconciliation and economic growth.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Romania for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first to thank the presidency of Benin and you, Sir, for convening this important meeting. Argentina welcomes and is gratified by your presence at this meeting of the Security Council. We also welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and extend our thanks to his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, for his introduction of the report. We also thank the Special Adviser on Child Protection to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Ibrahima Diouf.

Argentina welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations formulated for the West African subregion in the prior report of the Secretary-General and the 25 March statement by the President of the Security Council, and by the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004.

In that regard, we wish to highlight the regular contacts maintained between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and other United Nations entities, as well as the regular meetings held by the heads of the five political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion, with a view to developing integrated strategies in vulnerable border areas.

Cooperation among United Nations entities in West Africa, designed to harmonize subregional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, will help to consolidate peace processes throughout the region. In that respect, we find interesting the recommendation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that a standing fund for peacebuilding be established that could be used to fund rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, for example in West Africa.

However, cooperation should not be confined to military or political issues, but should be extended to relieving the precarious humanitarian situation of refugees and displaced persons in the subregion. The initiative taken by ECOWAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with a view to carrying out joint activities on such issues as security in refugee camps or harmonizing refugee policies in West Africa should be seen as a step forward.

Argentina feels that the joint cooperation initiative of ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations Office for West Africa, designed to promote the effective implementation of the 1979 ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people and goods and also to address the problems of roadblocks and the extortion associated with them, is a vital element in promoting the economic development of the region and generating employment allowing former combatants to be reintegrated.

As we all know, if there is to be trade and the free movement of people, there must first be peace and political stability in the region. In that regard, my country welcomes the new Small Arms Control Programme adopted by ECOWAS with a view to converting its moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons into a legally binding instrument. The establishment by ECOWAS of the Small Arms Unit, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the moratorium and its ultimate conversion into a convention, should be supported by contributions that will allow it to operate efficiently. Security sector reform, with the support of the international community, ECOWAS and the future regionally integrated programme of the United Nations Office for West Africa, is another essential instrument for preventing future conflicts.

Although international assistance is vital to promote peace in the region, it should be underscored that, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, the primary responsibility rests with the leaders and communities of West Africa. The Governments of the region should therefore not allow individuals who violate human rights or take part in such unlawful

activities as weapons and natural resources smuggling or money-laundering to enjoy impunity.

I would like to conclude by urging greater cooperation among civil society, ECOWAS and international organizations in order to prepare and implement plans of action on the cross-border issues we have discussed. The establishment in the ECOWAS secretariat of the post of coordinator for civil society issues to strengthen Africa's regional capacity in the area of peacebuilding points to the road ahead.

Finally, I would like to say that my delegation supports the draft presidential statement that may be adopted at the end of this meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Benin's Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration.

The delegation of Benin welcomes the holding of this meeting. I congratulate those who have made statements for their contributions to our collective deliberation on subregional cross-border issues posing a threat to peace and security in West Africa. I would like in particular to thank the Secretary-General, who honours me with his presence. I would also like to thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, for his introduction of the Secretary-General's progress report on ways to combat subregional and cross-border issues in West Africa (S/2005/86).

The report has the great virtue of highlighting a series of problems that have, or could have, a decisive impact on efforts to stabilize the West African subregion. Some of the problems it addresses have already been discussed in depth in the Security Council this month. I would recall the presidential statements adopted after the debates on small arms and children and armed conflict (S/PRST/2005/7 and S/PRST/2005/8). The views of the Government of Benin on those issues were amply covered on those occasions.

The seriousness of the consequences of these problems poses a real danger to the future of the States of the West African subregion. No one questions the need for effective action to combat them. In countries emerging from crisis or armed conflict and in neighbouring countries, those problems are made worse by deficiencies in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, which face very serious funding problems in the critical reintegration phase.

To that is added the humanitarian problems experienced by displaced persons and refugees and those associated with massive youth unemployment. West Africa has arrived at a dangerous point due to the risks that such problems pose to the stabilization efforts of countries emerging from armed conflict as well as to the institutions of countries that are now stable. In that connection, it is absolutely necessary to harmonize DDR programmes while taking into account the needs of women and children affected by armed conflict. We commend the various United Nations entities involved in that process. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has demonstrated great energy in addressing these problems. It deserves the full support of the international community in order that it may continue its work.

In that connection, I would like to reiterate the determination of the Government of Benin to actively contribute to the implementation of effective strategies to resolve those problems. Benin also agrees with the Secretary-General's analysis and with his recommendations to the Council, particularly with regard to the need to develop integrated strategies in sensitive border areas. In that connection, I am pleased to mention in particular the concept of local integration among bordering countries that was adopted by the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers meeting held in Accra on 18 January 2005. That concept, which promotes local communities' management of border areas, has led to the development of a programme with very specific goals: the cross-border initiative. Those goals include, first, the development of a convention on trans-border cooperation in the ECOWAS area to enable local border communities to conclude cooperation agreements among themselves; secondly, the spread of trans-border initiatives among all ECOWAS member countries; thirdly, the formulation and implementation of pilot cross-border projects; and, lastly, the exchange of experiences with other regions, in particular with regard to cross-border movements in Europe.

By adopting the concept, the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers meeting decided to take appropriate steps to

ensure its implementation on the basis of a participatory process that involves all ECOWAS member States. Among other things, there is a plan to establish an association of West African border regions and towns. The United Nations Office for West Africa should take those initiatives into account and give them its full support in the context of its own work. Those initiatives reflect true awareness of the need to manage border areas and make them an instrument for the promotion of peace and the well-being of the people living there. They are part of the efforts being made to improve basic conditions through the development and implementation of an integrated and coordinated approach to the prevention of conflicts in West Africa that involve all potential stakeholders, as the Secretary-General has advocated.

In that connection, there is real awareness in the West African subregion of the role of such decisive factors as good governance, the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions and the need for security-sector reform. In that regard, West Africa fully supports the approach outlined in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. We encourage the concerted efforts being developed or already begun to improve basic conditions in order to promote stability in West Africa. That strengthens the positive elements that make it possible — notwithstanding the shocks that have considerably weakened the area in recent years — to look forward with some optimism to the future of the West African subregion.

In that connection, the recent decisions taken by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) should be highlighted, as they set an example for all ECOWAS member States. UEMOA includes eight ECOWAS member States. It has just decided to eliminate the roadblocks set up as checkpoints on the main roads linking the countries of the monetary area. They will be replaced by joint patrols, which will make it possible to reconcile the need for free movement of persons and goods between countries with the requirements of national security.

Those positive changes will enhance the growing confidence that development partners have constantly shown towards the West African subregion. Support of these measures could be a real expression of commitment by the growing partnership between the United Nations agencies and the countries of West Africa. The effectiveness of the work done by the international community for the West African subregion requires massive mobilization, which should extend over several years. The channels of cooperation between the countries of the region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and development partners, multilateral and bilateral, should be supported through innovative initiatives that are coordinated and tailored to the needs of the countries and the local realities.

In conclusion, I too would like to express condolences to Bangladesh, which has just lost some members of its peacekeeping team in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that very soon those who have been injured will recover. This difficult ordeal should not discourage us from continuing with peacekeeping operations in countries that are in situations of armed conflict.

I now resume my functions of President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by welcoming you in our midst and congratulating you on the skilful way in which you are discharging your responsibilities as the head of this Council. It is a source of pride for us to see Benin presiding over the Security Council, a pride which is entirely understandable when one realizes that, in addition to being a neighbour, a brother and a friend of Burkina Faso, holding the same values and united in a common destiny within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Benin does us credit by its ardent and committed championing of the cause of peace.

Thus we fully understand that in your term in the presidency of the Council, you should wish to present for our consideration the thorny topic of cross-border issues in West Africa. You, Mr. President, are convinced, as we are, that the proper understanding and mastery of these phenomena will to a large extent determine whether stability and peace prevail in our subregion, thus enabling it to embark on genuine development.

We recognize, as the report of the Secretary-General does, that the last decade was particularly trying for West Africa in terms of conflict, political crises and insecurity in all its forms. Nonetheless, there

has been no lack of resolve and determination on the part of States or political leaders. Many of them have contributed with initiatives that have helped to rein in some forms of violence and banditry. Those initiatives include, among other factors, police cooperation and exchange of information among States and regular consultations among the authorities responsible for security issues. Even the bilateral commissions have offered opportunities to rethink the measures and actions undertaken to combat insecurity and instability in West Africa.

But it is plain that much more needs to be done to promote and render safe the free movement of people and goods among member countries within the meaning of the ECOWAS Protocol to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, trafficking in children and the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other mercenaries. Manifestly, there is a need for more resolve and more means to put a stop to monetary extortion and brutal acts committed at the roadblocks and to end the activities of traffickers and thieves of all descriptions. We must acknowledge that the magnitude of the actions required and the tasks to be fulfilled places a considerable constraint on the preventive and development policies of States and obliges them to rely on international assistance, first and foremost that of the United Nations.

The political and social consequences of the security situation and conflicts in West Africa have been thoroughly noted and studied in the successive reports of the Secretary-General. The Security Council itself became involved, including by dispatching a mission to the subregion in June 2004, a mission that reported exhaustively on the real situation prevailing in West Africa. Thus cooperation with the United Nations is encouraging and should be further strengthened with the admission of ECOWAS as an observer to the United Nations.

Above and beyond the specific assistance given in the context of peacekeeping operations, I believe that I can state that in Liberia and Sierra Leone and now in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations has, more than any other organization, made a decisive contribution in the struggle against two major scourges in West Africa: first, against the circulation of small arms and light weapons, in the framework of the Bamako Moratorium — to which much reference has been made this morning; and secondly, against the use of child soldiers, whose plight has been vividly depicted for us by Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Still, in the area of cooperation, I must not forget the increasingly visible partnership with the European Union, particularly in the area of training, logistical support, assistance to post-conflict reconstruction and assistance in the humanitarian area.

In February 2004 there was a consultation between the European Union and ECOWAS at Abuja, which led to the establishment of a common work programme with clearly defined objectives. We take this opportunity — even if voices of greater authority have already done so — to commend and thank all those of good will who thus helped our subregion find a better balance for tackling the only worthwhile objective: the battle for development.

Above and beyond all those actions, it must be clearly understood that the maintenance of peace and security in West Africa is first and foremost the responsibility of the States and all the political actors there.

In conclusion, I wish to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, whose important statement will undoubtedly help deepen our understanding of the issue, and especially to better define the vital elements of any resolution of cross-border issues in West Africa.

To you personally, Mr. President, we repeat how gratified we are with the exemplary way in which you represent us in the Security Council. Your colleague and friend, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, who would very much have wished to participate in this important debate but who was unable to travel at the last minute, has instructed me to convey this brotherly sentiment to you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Burkina Faso for the kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential

candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union thanks you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate. We thank the Secretary-General for his progress report on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86), and we commend Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his efforts in that context. The report describes the steps taken or envisaged to develop an integrated regional approach to conflict prevention in West Africa — the only viable approach, in our view.

The European Union, which attaches great importance to its partnership with Africa and its people, is resolved to continuously strengthen our ties with the African Union and with subregional organizations. We believe that the promotion of lasting peace — without which there can be no sustainable socio-economic development — is one of the major challenges facing the international community.

The European Union deplores the fact that West Africa is still racked by armed conflict, which jeopardizes the long-term development of the whole region, not to speak of the unspeakable suffering that afflicts the population.

The European Union is following with great concern the recent developments in the political situation in Togo. We call for full respect for civil liberties and demand an immediate return to constitutional and legal order to open the way for free and transparent presidential elections. In that context, we fully support the actions by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with a view to re-establishing constitutional order and the democratic process.

The prospects for the future in Côte d'Ivoire are also a source of concern for the European Union. Once again, we call on the parties to make progress towards the full implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis and Acra III agreements.

I should like to stress three aspects that are particularly important to us in the context of developing an integrated and coordinated approach to conflict prevention in West Africa.

First, we need to unite our efforts to address post-conflict situations. The report states clearly that the various United Nations missions need to collaborate and that a constructive partnership must be established among the United Nations system, development partners and ECOWAS. In that connection, the European Union welcomes the fact that the representatives of the five United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in West Africa are meeting periodically.

Together with ECOWAS and the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union have essential roles to play in West Africa in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and they must establish a more effective partnership. The European Union notes with satisfaction that the establishment of truly collaborative mechanisms to address cross-border problems has begun, with respect for the principle of African ownership. We look forward with interest to the plan of action to be submitted in June 2005 by the joint working group of the European Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA). Another positive example is the collective effort to be undertaken this year to facilitate the cross-border movement of persons and goods. Our common goal should now be to enhance the functioning of our dialogue and to unite the various initiatives, including through the efforts of the special representative of the European Union presidency to the Mano River Union countries.

Secondly, we need to strengthen regional capacity-building. In November 2004, the European Union adopted an action plan on supporting peace and security in Africa, which deals primarily with capacity-building. The action plan identifies practical ways in which to meaningfully assist African organizations in building autonomous conflict prevention and management capacities, supplementing the initiatives undertaken in the context of the Cotonou Agreement and the Africa Peace Facility. The European Union invites those organizations to put forth proposals for long-term capacity-building. A comprehensive €10-million programme to enhance conflict prevention and management capacities is now being developed by ECOWAS, with the participation of the United Nations.

ECOWAS, which has already proved itself in the area of conflict prevention and management, has become a stabilizing force in the region. The challenge for ECOWAS remains to integrate short-term crisis management activities into a longer-term prevention strategy. The European Union will intensify its political dialogue with ECOWAS and its member States, particularly with regard to policies designed to address the structural root causes of conflict with a view to a lasting solution and the role of regional economic integration in promoting peace and security.

Thirdly, we need to urgently address a number of specific cross-border issues. In his report, the Secretary-General assesses efforts to deal with a number of major cross-border problems. Although some progress has been made, much remains to be done, and more collaboration and better-targeted efforts are needed in many areas.

Two days ago, the Council considered, under your presidency, Sir, the extremely important issue of children affected by armed conflict (see S/PV.5129).

The proliferation of small arms remains a significant factor of instability and conflict in the region. Resolute and coordinated action is needed. During the open debate on small arms that was held last week (see S/PV.5127), the European Union had the opportunity to express its willingness to help put an end to the scourge of the uncontrolled accumulation of small arms. While the European Union welcomes the recent three-year renewal of the moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms in West Africa, we also encourage efforts in the framework of the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme to transform the moratorium into a legally binding instrument.

In addition, the European Union supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council consider giving peacekeeping missions the authority and the resources needed to monitor and enforce arms embargoes, as well as the idea of marking and tracing small arms used in peacekeeping missions. We should consider publishing a "naming and shaming" list of individuals and entities violating arms embargoes and the ECOWAS moratorium, and bringing before the International Criminal Court those responsible for criminal activities related to the trafficking of persons and of natural resources.

With regard to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), we welcome the ongoing efforts of the various United Nations presences in West Africa to find ways in which to harmonize programmes and to eliminate inconsistencies with a view to reducing the cross-border movement of combatants and weapons. The European Union also believes that the reintegration phase is of key importance for the success of DDR programmes. We call for increased international assistance — including financial assistance — for such activities in countries emerging from conflict, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Moreover, particular attention should be devoted to programmes for child soldiers and women combatants and to job creation.

The importance of security sector reform as a means to improve national governance and enhance security through institutional change is clear at both the national and regional levels. ECOWAS projects in the area of security sector reform can be financed through the Africa Peace Facility created by the European Union, and we encourage the West African region to undertake initiatives in that area. Accordingly, the European Union welcomes UNOWA's intention to establish regionally integrated programmes by the end of 2005.

The European Union's support for peace and security in West Africa is part of a coherent European Union policy towards Africa. The European Union has earmarked €235 million for West Africa under the current regional indicative programme, mainly in the sectors of regional economic integration and transport. The European Union's integrated long-term strategy for West Africa seeks to establish lasting peace and sustainable development, particularly through economic integration, and to create a customs union among ECOWAS countries. It includes constant attention to the vulnerable position of women and children and the increased risk of HIV/AIDS in armed conflict.

While the primary responsibility for progress in West Africa rests with its leaders and communities, let me conclude by reaffirming again that the work of the European Union will be based on the principle of unreserved cooperation and coordination with all actors in the field, including civil society organizations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Luxembourg for the kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Djangoné-Bi (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time under your presidency that my delegation has the honour of taking the floor, Mr. President, I wish, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you and to thank you for organizing today's debate on a topic dear to Africa: ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. We wish also to assure you of the great satisfaction that my delegation feels at seeing you, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, at this meeting. That attests to the importance that the sister Republic of Benin attaches to subregional and cross-border problems, faithfully echoing the ongoing concerns of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations regarding West Africa.

To guide this debate, the Secretary-General has issued a report on the topic under consideration, which is very instructive and which he introduced himself. His briefing was supported by Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, and also by the Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Diouf. I wish to pay tribute to both of them for their briefings.

Since independence many subregional and cross-border problems have affected international peace and security in West Africa, and they undermine all the development efforts of our States. Those problems are the increased use and unlawful proliferation of mercenaries, child soldiers, small arms and light weapons and their accessories, ammunition and explosive devices; a culture of impunity; the spread of HIV/AIDS; the continued weakening of the security sector; youth unemployment; environmental degradation; social exclusion; wars; mass movements of refugees; unfair and unlawful exploitation of natural resources; weak national institutions and civil society structures; violation of human rights, particularly those of women and children; and poor public management. Sadly, this list is far from exhaustive, as the Secretary-General himself recognized in his report S/2004/200.

The frenzy with which many producers, brokers and traffickers in small arms and their accessories illegally prey on Africa generally and on West Africa in particular is not mentioned. Similarly, there is no reference to the most perverse manifestations of liberalization and globalization in poor countries, for example.

If cross-border and subregional problems, whose links and cumulative mutual effects have been clearly highlighted by the Secretary-General, are not thoroughly listed, described and universally recognized, we will not find a realistic and achievable solution any time soon. By periodically adding to his analyses of the real political environment prevailing in the poor countries of West Africa, the Secretary-General will help to enhance a realistic understanding of subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa on the part of the Security Council and will thus help the Council to arrive at cohesive and rapidly evolving solutions to those problems. That will also contribute to the implementation by all actors, subregional and international, in the political life in West Africa of concerted actions that the Council will have assigned to them, both to entities of the United Nations and to their various partners.

My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his efforts to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to conflict prevention in West Africa, and we welcome the progress achieved in settling specific cross-border problems, to which he refers in the progress report before us for this debate. We encourage him to pursue and step up those efforts because we firmly believe — along with ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement — that Africa as a whole and West Africa, with which we are concerned today, will find salvation only through the effective and good-faith implementation of the integrated and coordinated approach to conflict prevention that is being developed.

My delegation can only welcome the fact that finally, as the Secretary-General had already pledged in his report S/2001/574, the United Nations has undertaken, in an irreversible manner, the healthy transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. By striving to achieve and tirelessly implement this culture of prevention, the progress, however modest, that has already been achieved in settling specific cross-border problems will ultimately pave the way to a progressive strengthening of international peace and security in West Africa. Such

progress will create and strengthen the optimal conditions for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and will reduce, and indeed eliminate, the need for United Nations peace missions in West Africa. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations is well aware of the growing burden that they represent for the United Nations, since such peace missions tend to become interminable. Everyone will be relieved by the possibility of ending them.

Let us hope for an effective transformation of the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms into a legally binding convention, which will complement the existing legal instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, their accessories, components and ammunition, as well as explosives.

It is essential to sensitize decision makers and populations so that they understand that, thanks to resolute action by States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), States will be able to control the transfer, stockpiling and use of weapons, which especially in Africa means strengthening democratic institutions and the capacity to provide public security. NGOs will have a role of monitoring, and of providing information and education to the population so as to support the democratic functioning of public institutions.

We ardently wish to see harmonization and concerted action, in West Africa as well as in the whole of Africa, to implement national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that receive, in a timely manner and at the necessary level, essential external technical, material and financial support. It would be desirable for integrated strategies to be implemented for sensitive border areas in West Africa, indeed in Africa generally, along the lines of those promoted by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Let us look forward to such effective and concrete measures. Only then will the interminable cycle of violence and instability become a distant memory in the history of the independent States of Africa. Armed conflicts, the recruitment and proliferation of mercenaries and child soldiers, illicit trafficking in small arms, violations of human rights, impunity, corruption, unemployment, excessive population growth, most infectious diseases, and all cross-border and subregional problems will be resolved in a lasting fashion. Thus peace will finally be established and consolidated in West Africa, and our peoples, our States and our nations will embark on the path towards the genuine realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of NEPAD, for the benefit of West Africa, Africa, the United Nations and the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Côte d'Ivoire for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity, Sir, to warmly welcome the holding of this open debate and to say how much we appreciate the outstanding manner in which you have been presiding over the Council. This meeting is another opportunity for us to consider ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa in order to restore long-term security and stability to the region.

The partnership for the maintenance of peace and security has yielded some results, particularly in Sierra Leone and in Liberia. Nevertheless, there are still major challenges to be met in order to consolidate peace in Guinea-Bissau; restore unity and peace in Côte d'Ivoire; and preserve the rule of law so as to be able to thwart attempted coups d'état, such as the dastardly attack perpetrated in my country against President Lansana Conté on 19 January last.

In that context — in which national, regional and international action is more important than ever in order to prevent the gains made from being undermined and to give impetus to the major economic and democratic reforms that are under way — in-depth consideration of the complex issue that is on the agenda of this meeting is very timely.

My delegation has already stated the views of my Government on the most effective ways to combat the use of child soldiers and to promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants. Now we would like to touch on ways and means to adopt a clear and coordinated approach aimed at finding lasting solutions to the problems of the proliferation of light weapons and of mercenaries, and to develop integrated strategies for the development of West Africa.

The seriousness and scope of the thorny question of light weapons is made clear in reports stating that about 500 million light weapons are circulating freely

in the world, of which 30 million are in Africa and 8 million in West Africa. The reports state that 60 per cent of those weapons are in the possession of civilians, and, unfortunately, that they kill some 500,000 people annually, of which 80 per cent are women and children.

That very grim picture is a confirmation of the fact that in Africa light weapons are not only the weapons of choice, but weapons of mass destruction as well. They are affordable, easy to handle and easy to obtain, and this explains in part why everyone has them. In addition, my delegation believes that it is the failure to harmonize national policies in keeping with the spirit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium and the absence of a legally binding instrument that have led to the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms.

We hope that the replacement of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development by the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme will contribute effectively to strengthening the capacities of national commissions. The Small Arms Unit established by ECOWAS, as the lead organization, should be given special attention by the donor community.

My country is convinced that the adoption by the West African States of a standardized end-user certificate and the establishment of an information-exchange mechanism, as recommended by resolution 1467 (2003) of 18 March 2003, adopted under the Guinean presidency of the Security Council, would help to trace small arms and to identify those responsible for their illicit trafficking.

Guinea fully supports the idea of a legal instrument for the marking and tracing of light weapons, as put forward by the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons, and we hope that it will be adopted at the group's third session in June 2005.

As stated in the report, the heads of State of the Mano River Union, drawing on their common experience, have called for the creation of effective mechanisms for consultation and control, notably on ways to deal with mercenaries. My delegation would stress that differences of view on this subject should not divert our attention away from the need to resolutely combat the problem and to eradicate it. The situation that has prevailed in West Africa for several years now is a challenge to us all.

Need I recall also that the high unemployment rate among young people and the failure to reintegrate former combatants in the long term pose an additional threat and exacerbate the problem of mercenaries in our region. That is why we suggest the inclusion, in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and in the mandates of peacekeeping missions in West Africa, of the principle of full respect for the relevant decisions taken by the African Union in combating the problem of mercenaries.

The steps taken at various levels in response to the appeals made by the Security Council to strengthen cooperation among United Nations bodies and their various partners and to promote a consistent approach to conflict prevention and to the consolidation of peace in West Africa do not yet fully meet the expectations of the Member States. This approach can be successful only if it is action-oriented and based on results in the field, with full cooperation on the part of the beneficiaries.

In that respect, the Government of Guinea deems totally inappropriate and has already rejected the decision taken by the International Contact Group for Liberia at its seventh working session, held on 17 September 2004, to expand its mandate and scope to include the other countries in the Mano River Union, as well as Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire.

We wish to reiterate once again the position of principle of the Government of Guinea, which was conveyed to the Security Council in 2003 during private consultations and which was also conveyed to the September 2004 ECOWAS ministerial meeting. That position has also been confirmed in writing to the parties concerned. That position states that, on the one hand, Guinea, unlike Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, is not a country in conflict or emerging from conflict; and that our domestic situation in no way constitutes a threat to peace and security in the subregion and, accordingly, is not described as such on the agenda of the Security Council.

In other words, extending the mandate of the Contact Group for Liberia to Guinea, which was not possible in 2003, cannot be justified in 2005.

However, my delegation would like to say that the Republic of Guinea will continue to work tirelessly

to restore peace in the West African subregion. That is a consistent element of our foreign policy.

That is why Guinea is striving with resolve to reactivate the Mano River Union. That was made clear on 20 May 2004 following the Conakry summit of the heads of State of the Union, which included the presidents of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and of the Republic of Mali. Guinea has also made that clear by adopting an instrument on 2 September 2004 during the bilateral meeting between Guinea and Sierra Leone, held at the highest level, that enabled Guinea peacefully to resolve, in a fraternal context, the border dispute between Guinea and Sierra Leone, relating to the village of Yanga. Guinea has thus set an example of promoting trust, peace and stability with our neighbours.

Moreover, paragraph 39 of the report notes the launching in October 2004 of a new initiative, known as "Integrated strategies for sensitive border areas in West Africa", in order to address problems in those areas. It also notes that the initiative focuses on four clusters of countries, including Guinea, and that the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) is planning a follow-up meeting this year.

My country welcomes that good news and would appreciate it if the strategy or plan for the revival of our Forestière area could be communicated to us so that we could play an active part, which is essential for the success of the endeavour. We hope that the meeting set for this year on sensitive border areas, with our various partners, will be successful.

Turning to the issue of security, Guinea encourages the partners to continue their efforts to increase the capacities of the West African subregion in assessing and addressing the threats it faces. We urge the United Nations to strengthen cooperation among its political, humanitarian and economic missions in the subregion, stressing, in particular, the joint use of logistics and resources, including border patrols. We strongly support the report's recommendation on harmonizing appeals for necessary humanitarian assistance to countries in crisis and to neighbouring States affected by those crises.

In conclusion, allow me to welcome the fact that the United Nations is making a greater contribution to the restoration of peace and security in West Africa. Allow me also to reaffirm the unswerving commitment of the Government and the people of Guinea to work together with all our partners to promote the emergence of a new Africa, freer than ever before from the stigma of war, poverty and destitution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Guinea for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Sir, my delegation too shares the view expressed by others that your presence here underscores the significance that Benin attaches to the role that the Security Council can play in the maintenance of peace and security in our West African subregion.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/86) — and we thank him for introducing it personally today — once again covers the entire spectrum of the steps now under way or being proposed to help combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. My delegation would like to offer some brief comments on the observations and conclusions contained in that latest report.

The Secretary-General states in the report that many of the border problems require joint efforts by the countries and peoples concerned, including civil society and its organizations and local communities. In that connection, the Security Council will be interested to know that earlier this week, parliamentarians, chiefs and elders from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, all ethnic Kissi people, met at Koindu, a border town in the Kailahun district of Sierra Leone, in a historic step towards the consolidation of subregional peace and stability. Until the rebel war and other armed incursions into the area, Koindu was a thriving international market serving the three countries of the Mano River Union.

In the presence of their heads of State or Government, the Kissi parliamentarians, chiefs and elders resolved, among other things, that there is an urgent need to support their respective Governments to implement the regional and subregional protocols relating to peace, security and the free movement of people, goods and services in the subregion. Perhaps the most significant part of their communiqué was a request for the Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to facilitate the establishment of

international markets at Koindu, Gueckedou and Foya, and to improve the road network to facilitate easy access to those markets.

The Security Council may recall the serious humanitarian and refugee situation that arose in the areas of Gueckedou and Parrot's Beak almost four years ago, following a series of cross-border armed attacks. This week's meeting in Koindu should be seen as an important contribution to the integrated strategies, described by the Secretary-General in his report, for stabilizing border areas.

My delegation also takes this opportunity to mention another recent development in addressing what may be perceived as a potential cross-border problem. My colleague the representative of Guinea briefly referred to it earlier. This is the so-called Yenga problem between Sierra Leone and Guinea — something which, unfortunately, has been grossly exaggerated. The Security Council should take note of the Sierra Leonean proposal for an independent group of consultants, preferably under the aegis of the United Nations and working with experts from both countries, to replace the beacons that are missing along the border that had already been demarcated.

In his latest report, the Secretary-General has listed some of the areas where, in his view, much more remains to be done for a more effective contribution to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in West Africa. He mentions, for example, the need to convert the ECOWAS moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa into a legally binding instrument. Sierra Leone shares the view of the Secretary-General that such conversion of the moratorium would send a strong signal to development partners and the wider international community that West African Governments are themselves prepared to address decisively the devastating effects of the proliferation of small arms — a major contributing factor to political, economic and social instability in the region. We acknowledge, in that connection, the support of the European Union and others for upgrading the moratorium.

Now that efforts are under way to convert the moratorium into a legally binding instrument, we believe that the Security Council should also send the same signal to the wider international community concerning the devastating effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It can do so by pronouncing itself unequivocally on the need for an international legally binding instrument on the tracing and marking of illicit small arms and light weapons. In our view, that would constitute a significant contribution to our efforts to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. A non-binding instrument or political declaration is not enough. As the representative of the United Kingdom eloquently noted this morning, we must move from the mode of rhetoric to the mode of substance, in the form of a legally binding commitment to deal with that scourge.

One cannot speak about subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa without referring to the situation of youth, or what the Secretary-General rightly describes in his report as the shocking levels of youth unemployment in West Africa. That is the heart of the matter, and therein lies perhaps the most viable, effective and long-lasting means of dealing with conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development in the subregion. The state of youth unemployment manifests itself in such regional and cross-border problems as mercenarism, rebel recruitment, the circulation and use of illicit small arms and light weapons and illicit mining.

We wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary-General that first, the growing numbers of young men and women who lack the prospect of ever being able to work for a decent living are a major threat to the future of the subregion and, secondly, that the shocking levels of youth unemployment and the desperation that accompanies it not only could undermine any progress that countries such as Sierra Leone may have made, but also carry a real risk of destroying the political and social structures of currently stable countries.

Experience over the past 10 years has taught us in West Africa that we can no longer remain complacent about the existence of a few pockets of stability here and there, while other spots of the region are collapsing as a result of prolonged armed conflict. Youth unemployment in West Africa must be addressed as a matter of priority at the national, regional and subregional levels. Indeed, measures to reduce youth unemployment should be regarded as key to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development. Those measures transcend the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. As we say in Sierra Leone, hundreds of thousands of young people never handled weapons. They were not combatants. They

need to be integrated — not necessarily reintegrated — into the mainstream of society.

Of course, we agree with the Secretary-General that the primary responsibility for promoting peace and stability in the region rests with West African leaders and communities themselves. However, we should emphasize that we in West Africa already have in place appropriate institutions and mechanisms for the promotion of regional and subregional economic cooperation and integration, such as ECOWAS and the Mano River Union. In spite of obvious constraints, they have already demonstrated a propensity — indeed, the capability — for conflict prevention, development and even peacekeeping. We in Sierra Leone know what ECOWAS did for us during those dark, dark days before — and I emphasize before — the deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

What those regional and subregional organizations need most is the continued and sustained support of the international community. For its part, the Security Council must continue to monitor responses to and implementation of the recommendations it has formulated for strengthening collaboration among the various United Nations institutions, agencies, programmes and partners. The emphasis should remain on an integrated approach to conflict prevention and development in West Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): May I first thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address this body on behalf of the Group of African States.

I wish to express our appreciation to you for convening yet another important meeting of the Security Council on cross-border issues in West Africa. It is heartwarming for us that this subject is being discussed under the Beninois presidency and steered by you. That is an indication of your country's commitment to the goals of peace, security, stability and progress in our subregion and the African continent as a whole.

We are also grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing interest in the best approaches towards the resolution of conflicts in the region. His exertions reflect the shared desire to make West Africa and, indeed, Africa as a whole crisis-free.

Conflicts in the West African subregion have claimed many lives and rendered thousands of people traumatized and homeless. Generations of our youth have been sucked into those conflicts and lost their childhood and innocence. Women have been abused and exploited. Indeed, the devastation wreaked by those conflicts is writ large on the destroyed cities and infrastructure of affected countries. Worse still, their consequences have been felt beyond the immediate theatres of operation, compounding the challenges created by the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, increasing desertification and environmental degradation, and a crippling debt burden.

While significant progress has been and continues to be made in resolving those conflicts, the subregion remains vulnerable. We therefore share the Secretary-General's assessment of the desirability of an integrated and coordinated approach to conflict prevention. Elements of that approach, identified in the report, include better collaboration among the United Nations entities in the region through the exchange of information and analysis and joint planning; the reactivation of the Mano River Union; the consolidated appeals process for West Africa; and joint action by the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union.

For our countries, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a major scourge. The unrestrained access to those weapons by individuals and groups has fuelled conflicts with attendant cross-border crimes, including armed banditry. Those weapons have also proved to be a great disincentive to non-State actors to follow the path of peace through negotiation.

On our own, we, the States members of ECOWAS and the African Union, are constrained in effectively countering the consequences of proliferation of those weapons, which are manufactured outside the region and imported into our countries by non-State actors, in collaboration with arms producers and suppliers. Our current efforts, amply demonstrated by our strict adherence to the ECOWAS moratorium on the

importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, as well as by the creation of the new ECOWAS Small Arms Unit, need the clear support and action of other members of the international community to achieve the desired goal.

The progress made so far in the negotiation of a draft treaty on marking and tracing by the ad hoc group constituted for that purpose should spur Member States to overcome the remaining obstacles to the early conclusion of those negotiations. That would ensure that an agreed text can be presented for adoption by the General Assembly this year. Meanwhile, we join the Secretary-General in inviting our development partners to provide funds to ECOWAS to enable its new Small Arms Control Programme to effectively take off.

The time has also come to identify individuals, corporations, groups and countries that have been implicated in the illegal exportation of small arms and light weapons to our subregion, in violation of arms embargos imposed by this Council and in clear disregard of the ECOWAS moratorium. We share the Secretary-General's assessment of the need for the Council to produce a "naming and shaming" list of such individuals, corporations, groups and countries, cognizant that this would help reduce, if not totally stamp out, the traffic in small arms and light weapons in our subregion. By our subjecting such culprits to prosecution for attendant crimes, the cause of peace and justice in our region would be well served. Moreover, it would serve notice of the determination of the Council to stop that blood trade and to act consistent with its interest in the subject.

The need to take into account specific local socio-economic and geopolitical factors in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process has been recognized in the Secretary-General's report. Obviously, such an approach would have to incorporate such groups or areas as child combatants, foreign combatants, female combatants, military groups, monitoring components and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in countries not at war but deeply affected by armed conflicts in the region. The ultimate goal should be the social and economic reintegration of former disarmed combatants, including women and children, into society so as to ensure the stability and security of the affected States. We wish, in that regard, to draw attention to the success stories in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where demobilized child soldiers have been reunited with their families and/or repatriated to their countries of origin. Those are success stories rarely reported in the mainstream media, but they attest to the valuable work of the United Nations and the engagement of the Security Council.

It is evident from the report of the Secretary-General that West Africa is confronted with a major refugee and displaced persons problem. Only a comprehensive view of those problems will facilitate a permanent solution, with affected countries driving the process. As stated in the report, such a solution should include security sector reform, including support for a regional position on "the phenomenon of violent military adventurism to seize power" (*S/2005/86, para. 34*). It should also be consistent with the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people and goods.

We believe that close cooperation between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and ECOWAS on investigation techniques used by national law enforcement agencies will complement current efforts by the Governments of the subregion in those areas. In addition, the existing initiative entitled "Integrated strategies for sensitive border areas in West Africa" — which includes the participation of the United Nations Office for West Africa, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ECOWAS, development partners, civil society groups and concerned United Nations country teams and peace missions — is focusing attention on those problems in sensitive border zones. If fully implemented, the initiative should help prevent possible outbreaks of violence, restore trust and confidence in inter-State relations and promote peace and stability in West Africa.

Finally, the challenges of cross-border problems in West Africa can be effectively addressed only when opportunities for economic growth and development are enhanced. Like most other developing countries, the countries in our region are concerned not only with the visible consequences of conflicts, human rights abuses and poor governance, but also with the state of our economies, and especially that of our young people. The graphic picture painted of youth unemployment and its potential negative impact on the social fabric, peace, stability and security of our subregion is indicative of the scope of the challenges we face. It is therefore our expectation that this debate will strengthen the resolve of the Council, as well as

that of the international community at large, to take action on these issues.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his kind words addressed to me and my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mali. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to congratulate Benin for convening this open meeting of the Security Council on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa.

We associate ourselves with the statement just made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation congratulates the Secretary-General on his progress report contained in document S/2005/86 of 11 February 2005. We also congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa for his presentation.

The instability that has prevailed in our subregion for over 15 years has required regular monitoring by the United Nations, in particular by the Security Council. The various Security Council missions to the subregion in recent years clearly attest to the concern of this body about the precarious regional peace and security situation. The establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa was properly intended to enhance the contribution of the United Nations to security and peace in the subregion. In the Secretary-General's previous report on this matter (S/2004/200), the Office identified a series of problems besetting the subregion and causing instability. Most of them had one thing in common: their cross-border nature. In addition to the work of the various United Nations peacekeeping and political missions managing existing crisis situations, my delegation welcomes the initiatives taken by the Office to develop coherent conflict-prevention strategies.

The multidimensional nature of the problems calls for close cooperation among humanitarian, military and political actors. My delegation is therefore pleased that steps are being taken to implement those strategies in cooperation with various partners. The interaction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and other United Nations bodies with the heads of the various peacekeeping missions makes it possible to carry out an exchange of experiences in order to foster greater consistency in managing their activities.

As evidenced in the joint work programme for 2004-2005, cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Office for West Africa will help to improve the capacity of ECOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict stabilization and the development of a strategy to combat youth unemployment. All of those things are priorities for the subregion. My delegation welcomes the involvement of the European Union in that process, which should ultimately lead to a plan of action in May 2005. The measures to be included in the plan of action will facilitate unhindered cross-border movement of people and goods in the States of the region, which is an important aspect of subregional integration. Those measures will also aim at protecting children in armed conflict.

Civil society is increasingly involved in designing and implementing plans of action dealing with cross-border issues. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the establishment of a coordination centre for civil society in the ECOWAS secretariat and the setting up of the West Africa Civil Society Forum. The involvement of the private sector through the Secretariat's Global Compact office in the search for peace and stability in West Africa — especially through the promotion of commercial practices that reflect the needs of local communities, in particular those affected by conflict — is an innovative approach that will strengthen solutions that have already been implemented.

In assessing the progress made in solving cross-border problems, the report of the Secretary-General refers to the creation of the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme, whose purpose is to transform the ECOWAS moratorium into a legally binding instrument and to strengthen the capacities of national commissions — to which end ECOWAS has established a Small Arms Unit. My delegation supports the report's recommendation that generous contributions be provided to that new structure so that it can discharge its mandate. The report also proposes other measures to reduce the circulation of small arms and light weapons in the subregion: strengthening the mandate of peacekeeping operations to monitor and

implement arms embargoes; institutionalizing the practice of marking and tracing the weapons used in those missions; and punishing those guilty of violations. Those measures can have an impact if they are effectively implemented.

My delegation encourages the effort to establish greater interaction among the various peacekeeping missions in the subregion in order to harmonize disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes and eliminate the contradictions that exist between them. We agree with the Secretary-General that such a regional approach could help reduce cross-border movements of combatants and weapons. It could also serve as a way to take joint action whenever possible. Moreover, the reintegration and reconstruction elements also need to be strengthened in order to avoid any possibility of the resumption of conflict. In that connection, particular focus should be placed on women and children.

The joint activities of ECOWAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on behalf of refugees and displaced persons should create conditions for voluntary return when circumstances so permit, or integration in the host countries. In the latter case, the host community should be given support by the international community.

The previous report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/200) revealed the problems caused by security forces where there is no rule of law. Such forces can be a danger to the constitutional order, stability and respect for freedom, rather than defending them. The need for security sector reform is sorely needed in some countries, as are training and outreach activities.

Sensitive border areas deserve special attention from the Governments of the subregion and the United Nations. Governments of the subregion must work together to develop integrated strategies to deal with the problems of these regions; those activities should be aimed at stabilizing those areas. My delegation is pleased to note that ECOWAS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and other partners launched such an initiative in October 2004. We encourage them to implement it for the sake of the well-being of the inhabitants of border areas and of the people of the subregion as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Mali for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker is the representative of Niger. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moutari (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Sir, your colleague and friend, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of Niger, very much wished to be here today to participate in this discussion on behalf of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Unfortunately, developments in Togo have meant that she must remain in our subregion. She has therefore instructed me to convey her regrets, and to thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council for having convened this public debate on cross-border issues in West Africa.

On her behalf, I also welcome the considerable attention that the Council is paying to the problems of West Africa in general, and to border-related problems in particular.

There could be no more suitable occasion to discuss these issues, since today is the eve of the one hundred twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Berlin Conference, that gathering of colonial Powers on Africa — without the presence of Africans — held from 15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885, which resulted in the carving up of the so-called black continent into colonial possessions that were subsequently to become independent, within borders that are straitjackets for each of the States concerned, while also constituting, in many cases, sources of discord among them.

For a regional economic community such as ECOWAS, whose primary mission is to provide for the well-being of its people through economic and social integration, the question of borders and their attendant problems is, of course, a matter of major concern. This concern becomes a source of anxiety as it affects the mobility of populations both in times of peace and in times of crisis.

I wish to share with Council members, our comments and our concerns, but also our hopes and wishes, as regards one of the most recurrent cross-border problems that our region must tackle, and which has to do with the mobility of our populations. There is a high degree of mobility among the populations of the ECOWAS area. Movements are prompted largely by the need to seek employment, or by family reasons. According to studies on this issue, at the end of the

1990s, 11 per cent of the population of West Africa, Nigeria excluded, resided in a State member of the Community other than their country of origin. Moreover, 30 to 40 per cent of the inhabitants of the region, again Nigeria excepted, no longer lived in their district or community of origin.

Generally speaking, there are favourite destinations in West Africa, especially when there is a need to find a professional occupation, or to buy or sell a consumer product. The following movements are to be seen: there is great movement from Burkina Faso, from Mali and from Niger to Côte d'Ivoire; fairly significant movement from Guinea to Senegal; and a fairly high level of migration from Senegal to the Gambia.

Migration in West Africa is either voluntary — caused by the quest for better living conditions; labour migration — or forced, as a result of conflict or of natural catastrophe or disaster. The displacement of populations from one country to another is often made difficult by the growing number of hindrances to the movement of migrants. Practices that are being pursued at our border posts and the many roadblocks on our roads are barriers and burdens for the population. As a result of such practices and of the roadblocks, road travel is needlessly prolonged and taxes the travel budget of the people concerned, while also, of course, impinging on their most fundamental rights.

Populations are thus obliged to bribe road safety officers or those manning border posts, even when they are in compliance with the legislation governing movement from one country to another. Extortion and abuse at the border posts have often provoked a revolt among neighbouring populations, leading to crises between two adjacent countries.

It should also be noted that the purpose of such mobility is not always lawful. Movements also arise because of large-scale banditry and cross-border crime. Thus, as a result of the porous nature of our borders, the lack of skill among border agents or the greed of some of those agents, some criminals manage to exploit this mobility in order to engage in unlawful activities, or to evade the security forces. Thus, many armed gangs are able to hide out or even disappear after having committed abuses in a neighbouring country. Developments in the trafficking of goods, weapons, vehicles and human beings, especially women and children, attest to the scale of the cross-border problems experienced by West Africa.

The management of border areas is thus a major problem, because, for the local populations residing there, the borders, as drawn, cannot alter the centuries-long relations and bonds of kinship shared with people on the other side. Management becomes a problem when farmland or a service-provider located on the other side of the border is involved, thus requiring daily crossings.

Such complaints and grievances have become widespread among our populations, and the many meetings of the security services of bordering countries demonstrate our national Governments concern at this state of affairs, which is a curb on economic integration, which should chiefly benefit these populations.

In order to meet those shortcomings, ECOWAS has adopted a set of measures: the Protocol relating to free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment, which includes three phases — right of entry and abolition of visa, right of residence and right of establishment; the Protocol relating to the definition of community citizenship, which defines the conditions for community citizenship; the decision establishing a travel certificate for ECOWAS member States; the decision regarding the establishment of a harmonized immigration and emigration form in ECOWAS member States; and finally, the decision relating to the adoption of an ECOWAS passport.

In addition to those measures — whose implementation has seen some significant progress — ECOWAS has taken the initiative of developing a programme called "border countries", whose main objective is to accelerate the economic integration process through local integration, enabling border populations to share some goods and services because of their socio-economic and cultural homogeneity. With that programme, ECOWAS intends to begin, in the context of regional integration, a new, broader and more dynamic approach and a new local development plan.

Addressing and resolving issues related to cross-border problems is a major challenge for ECOWAS in the context of its regional integration mission. It is absolutely essential that those issues be taken into account in ECOWAS programmes and policies in order to establish lasting peace in the region, which alone

can secure an environment conducive to economic and social development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Niger for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah to respond to comments made and questions raised.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah (*spoke in French*): As it is late, I will not be long-winded. I would just like to thank Council members and the African speakers for the attention they are giving to the problems of the region and for the support they expressed. My colleagues and I will be seeking to implement the main elements in the statements, and we will be communicating bilaterally with the States concerned and in the next report of the Secretary-General.

The President (*spoke in French*): After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has carefully reviewed the progress report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/86), dated 11 February 2005, on the implementation of the recommendations of the Council on cross-border and subregional problems in West Africa and reaffirms the statement of its President, S/PRST/2004/7 of 25 March 2004.

"The Council notes with appreciation the enhanced cooperation among the various United Nations political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion and looks forward to receiving the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on inter-mission cooperation. The Council also welcomes the growing and constructive partnership between the United Nations system, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), individual Member States and key bilateral and multilateral development partners, as well as civil society organizations, including women's organizations, aiming at addressing the many complex challenges confronting the West African subregion.

"The Council reiterates its belief that action on cross-border and subregional issues should take place as part of a wider strategy of conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in the subregion. The Council thus also encourages the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) to further promote an integrated and joint subregional approach with ECOWAS and the African Union, as well as with other key international partners and civil society organizations.

"The Council welcomes the encouraging prospects for the reactivation of the Mano River Union and the resumption of dialogue among its member States, notably on ways to deal with mercenaries. It welcomes also initiatives taken by ECOWAS to establish a Small Arms Unit and to adopt a new Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP), and its ongoing efforts to transform the Moratorium signed in Abuja on 31 October 1998, on the import, export and manufacture of small arms and light weapons, into a binding convention.

"The Council welcomes the decision of the European Commission on 2 December 2004 to assist ECOWAS in implementing its plans to combat illicit dissemination of small arms. The Council reiterates its call on all Member States and organizations in a position to do so to extend further assistance to ECOWAS in this field. The Council calls on arms-producing and exporting countries and West African States to explore ways in which they can ensure the implementation of the Moratorium.

"The Council calls on Member States and key international partners to explore practical ways of assisting ECOWAS in enhancing its capacities in the areas of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping, including through the provision of technical expertise, training programmes and logistical and financial resources. In this connection, the Council reaffirms the crucial importance of the reintegration of ex-combatants, taking into account the special needs of child soldiers and women, in order to reverse the culture of violence and create an enabling environment for national reconciliation in countries emerging from conflict, and reiterates its call to the international community to provide adequate funding to this end.

"The Council underlines that ongoing or emerging crises in West Africa are a threat to the subregional stability and in this regard notes with deep concern the tensions emerging and ongoing in some countries over the transfer of power, involving members of security and armed forces, and which may further obstruct efforts to stabilize the subregion.

"The Council recalls in this regard the African Union position on unconstitutional changes of Governments, as stated in the 1999 Algiers Declaration and the 2000 Lomé Declaration.

"The Council welcomes the action taken by ECOWAS and the African Union to address these issues.

"The Council expresses its deep concern about the involvement of individuals including those from security and armed forces in such illicit activities as smuggling of arms, drugs and natural resources, human trafficking, extortion at roadblocks and money-laundering, in the context of mismanagement in the administration of justice, and weak government capacity to fight against criminal activities and impunity. The Council stresses the need to pay special attention to those critical issues that have direct bearing on efforts to enhance peace, stability and democratic governance in West African countries.

"The Council emphasizes the need to pursue security sector reforms aiming at improving civil-military relations in countries emerging from conflict situations and creating a culture of peace and stability and promoting the rule of law. In this regard, the Council requests UNOWA to further explore with interested Governments and organizations ways in which security sector reforms could be formulated and implemented.

"In this regard, the Council welcomes the ongoing efforts of ECOWAS, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to improve border control mechanisms in West Africa by facilitating the flow of information among national law enforcement authorities, as well as regional networking and cooperation on the law enforcement issues.

"The Council reiterates the importance of curbing the growing risks of instability along some border areas. The Council, therefore, encourages UNOWA to facilitate, in close cooperation with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and its member States concerned, the implementation of the strategies developed for sensitive border zones in the subregion and calls on the donors to support these efforts.

"The Council stresses the need to help West African States to curb illicit cross-border activities and to strengthen the capacities of the civil society groups working to promote a cross-border culture of non-violence and peace.

"The Council further emphasizes the need to generate economic activities and foster development as a means of promoting sustainable peace in the subregion. It urges international donors to assist ECOWAS States to address that need.

"The Security Council reaffirms the urgency of finding lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups. In this connection, the Council requests the Secretary-General to include in his next progress report practical recommendations on how best to tackle the problem of youth unemployment.

"The Council urges the donor countries, international organizations and civil society to address the dire humanitarian situation in many parts of the subregion and to provide adequate resources in the framework of the consolidated appeals process 2005 for West Africa as part of a regional humanitarian response strategy to improve the human security of the people in dire need of protection or those whose coping capacities are close to exhaustion.

"The Council expresses its intention to keep these issues under review and requests the Secretary-General to report on them regularly through his reports on the United Nations missions in the subregion."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2005/9.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2.25 p.m.